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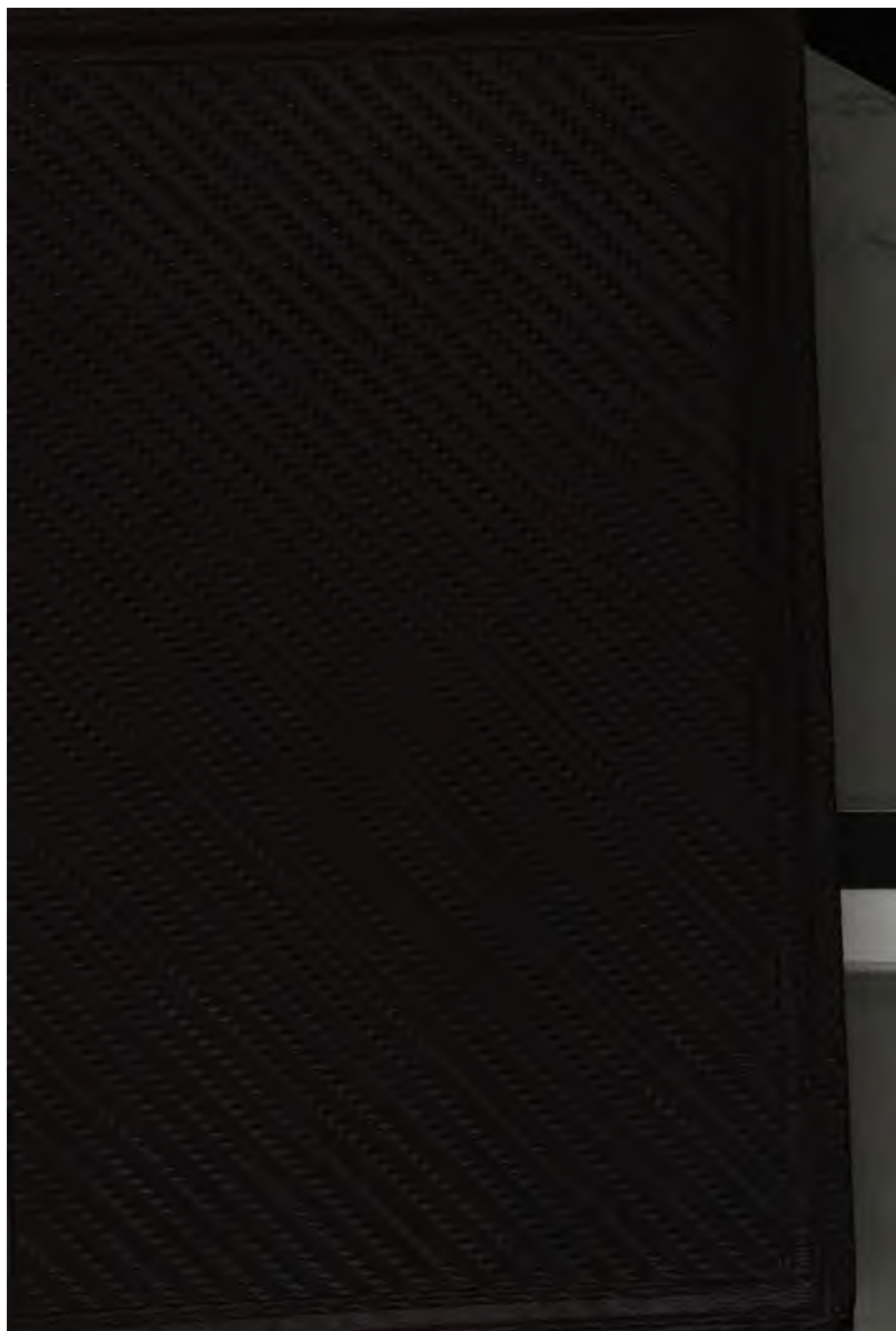
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THE FORTY DAYS
AFTER
OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION.



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THE FORTY DAYS
AFTER
OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM HANNA, LL.D.
AUTHOR OF "THE LAST DAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION."

EDINBURGH:
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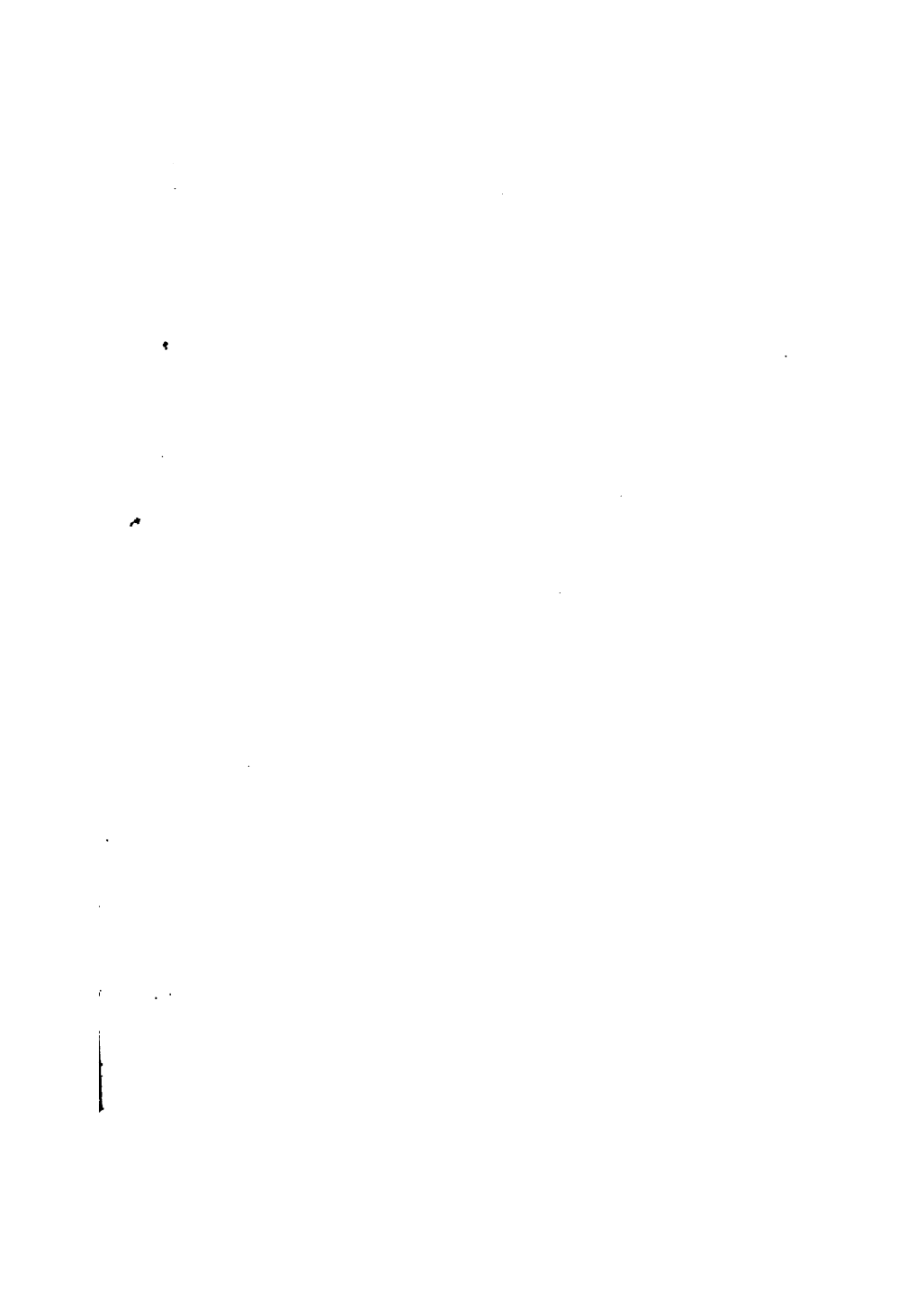
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P R E F A C E.

I HAVE long had the conviction that the results of that fuller and more exact interpretation of the books of the New Testament to which biblical scholars have been conducted, might be made available for framing such a continuous and expanded narrative of the leading incidents in our Redeemer's life as would be profitable for practical and devotional, rather than for doctrinal or controversial purposes. It was chiefly to try whether I could succeed in realizing the conception I had formed of what such a narrative might be made, that the volume on the *Last Day of Our Lord's Passion* was published. The favourable reception which it met has induced me to issue a companion volume on the succeeding and clos-

ing period of our Lord's life on earth. Should this meet with anything like equal favour, I will be encouraged to prosecute the task of completing the narrative in a similar form.

To one who previously had doubts of the historic truth of the entire Gospel narrative, a personal inspection of the localities in which the events are represented as having occurred, must have a peculiar interest and value. It was in such a state of mind, half inclined to believe that the whole story of the Gospel was legendary, that M. Renan visited the Holy Land three years ago. He has told us the result. "All that history," he says, "which at a distance seemed to float in the clouds of an unreal world took instantly a body, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking accord between the texts and the places, the marvellous harmony of the evangelical picture with the country which served as its frame, were to me as a revelation. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, mutilated but still legible, and ever afterwards in the recitals of Matthew and Mark,


instead of an abstract Being that one would say had never existed, I saw a wonderful human figure live and move." In listening to this striking testimony as to the effect of his visit to the East, we have deeply to regret that with M. Renan the movement from incredulity towards belief stopped at its first stage.

Besides its use in cases like that of Renan, in removing pre-existing doubts, a journey through Palestine is of the greatest service in giving a certain freshness and vividness to one's conceptions of the incidents described by the Evangelists, which nothing else can impart. Its benefits in this respect it would be difficult to exaggerate. But if any one go to the Holy Land full of the expectation of gazing on spots, or limited localities, once hallowed by the Redeemer's presence, and closely linked with some great event in his history ; or if he go, cherishing the idea, that a study of the topography will throw fresh light upon some of the obscurer portions of the Gospel record, he will be doomed, I apprehend,

to disappointment. I had the strongest possible desire to plant my foot upon some portion of the soil of Palestine, on which I could be sure that Jesus once had stood. I searched diligently for such a place, but it was not to be found. Walking to and fro, between Jerusalem and Bethany, you have the feeling—one that no other walks in the world can raise—that He often traversed one or other of the roads leading out to the village. But when you ask where, along any one of them, is a spot of which you can be certain that Jesus once stood there, you cannot find it. The nearest approach you can make to the identification of any such spot, is at the point where the lower road curves round the shoulder of Mount Olivet, the point from which the first view of Jerusalem would be got by one entering the city by this route. It is here that Dr. Stanley supposes Jesus to have paused and beheld the city, and to have wept over it. There is every likelihood that his supposition is correct ; and it was with his description fresh in the memory, that more than once I visited the

memorable spot. I found, however, that the best topographer of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, whom I had the fortune to meet there—one who had studied the subject for years—was strongly inclined to the belief that it was along the higher and not the lower road that the triumphal procession passed ; and that it was on his reaching the summit of Mount Olivet, that the city burst upon the Saviour's view. It did not alter my own conviction that Dr. Stanley was correct ; but it hindered, indeed destroyed the impression which absolute certainty would have produced.


There is indeed one circle of limited diameter, I believe but one, that you can trace on the soil of Palestine, and be absolutely certain that Jesus once stood within its circumference,—that which you may draw round Jacob's Well near Sychar. I had determined to tread that circle round and round ; to sit here and there and everywhere about, so as to gratify a long-cherished wish. How bitter the disappointment on reaching it to find no open space at the well-mouth ;



but, spread all round, the remains of an old building, over whose ruinous walls we had to scramble and slide down, through heaps of stones and rubbish, till through two or three small apertures we looked down into the undiscoverable well!

It would seem indeed that, Jacob's Well excepted, there is not a definite locality in Palestine that you can certainly and intimately connect with the presence of Jesus Christ. The grotto shown at Bethlehem may have been the stable of the village inn, but who can now assure us of the fact? It is impossible to determine the site of that house in Nazareth under whose roof, for thirty years, Jesus lived. Of Capernaum, the city in which most of his wonderful works were wrought, scarcely a vestige remains. Travellers and scholars are disputing which is Capernaum among various obscure heaps of ruins on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. No one, I believe, can tell the exact place where any one of our Lord's miracles was wrought, or any

one of his parables was spoken. The topographical obscurity that hangs around the history of Jesus, reaches its climax at Jerusalem. Bethany is sure, but the house of Lazarus is a fable. The Mount of Olives remains, but it cannot have been where they show it, so near the city, that the real Gethsemane lay. You cannot err as to the ridge on which of old the Temple stood, but where were the courts around it, in which Jesus so often taught ; where the palace of the High Priest, the hall of Pilate, the ground on which the cross stood, the new sepulchre in which they laid his body ? Whenever you try to get at some fixed and limited locality, it eludes your search. All is obscurity ; either utterly unknown, or covered with a thickening cloud of controversy. May it not have been meant that the natural, but in this case too human curiosity that we cherish, should be baffled ? Is it not better that he should have passed away, leaving so little of minute local association connected with his presence in the midst of us ? Does it not seem more




in accordance with the dignity of his divine character, that of all the lives that were ever lived on earth, his should be the one that it is least possible to degrade by rude familiarities of conception ; his the name which it is least possible to mix up with that superstition which ever seeks an earthly shrine at which to offer its incense ?

It is true that tradition has fixed on many holy places in Palestine, and that each year sends crowds of worshippers to these shrines ; but as the darkness of those ages in which these traditions arose is giving place to light, the faith in many of these holy places cannot stand against the gathering force of evidence. The time must come, however long it be of arriving, when what is doubtful and what is sure shall be clearly known ; and if then, still more than now, it shall appear that the most wonderful of all earthly lives has left the fewest visible marks of itself behind in recognisable localities, it will also, perhaps, be believed that this is so, not without a purpose,

but that it should be manifest that the ties of Jesus of Nazareth were not with places, but with persons ; the story of his life one easily and equally understood in all ages and in every land.

It was while the sheets of this volume were passing through the press, that the *Vie de Jesus* came into the writer's hands. I need not say with what lively interest I turned to that part of it in which the period of our Saviour's life of which this volume treats should have been represented. I found an utter blank. "For the historian," says M. Renan, "the life of Jesus terminates with his last breath." It would perhaps scarcely be fair to call this a verdict against evidence, as M. Renan has told us that in a future volume he will explain to us how the legend of the resurrection arose. We must be permitted, however, even in absence of such explanation, to express our strong conviction of the unreasonableness of that procedure which assumes that what are good and sufficient materials for history up to the death of Jesus, are utterly useless afterwards.



Admitting for the moment that the resurrection, as a miraculous event, did not and could not happen, the seeing and conversing with Jesus was surely a thing as much within the power of human testimony to establish at one time as at another. And if those witnesses are to be credited, as M. Renan admits they are, who tell us of seeing and hearing him before the crucifixion, why are the same witnesses to be discredited when they tell us of seeing and hearing him after that event? If the mixture of miracle with recorded incident throws the later period out of the historian's pale, should it not have done the same with the earlier period also?

This however is not the place to enter upon any of those momentous topics which M. Renan has brought up afresh for discussion. There are different modes in which his *Life of Jesus* may be met and answered. One is a full and critical exposure of all the arbitrary assumptions and denials, affirmations without proof, doubts without reasons, inconsistencies and contradictions, errors historical

and exegetical, which are to be met with throughout the volume. Renan's own range of scholarship is so extensive, and he has derived his materials from so many sources, that we trust no incompetent hand will rashly undertake the critical dissection of his book. A simpler, more direct, and more effective method of dealing with this work, would be to expose its flagrant failure in what may be regarded as its capital design and object;—to eliminate all that is superhuman and divine from the character and life of Christ, and yet leave him a man of such pure, exalted, unrivalled virtue, as to be worthy of the unreserved and unbounded love and reverence of mankind. Let the fancy sketch of Jesus of Nazareth, which M. Renan has presented to us, be stripped of that rich colouring which he has thrown around it, and it will appear as that of a man who at times showed himself to be ignorant, weak, prejudiced, extravagant, fanatical; who in his teaching advanced sometimes what was foolish, sometimes what was positively immoral; who in his prac-


tice, was often himself misled, and became at least an accomplice in misleading and deceiving others ;—it is such a man whom he holds forth to us, and would have us venerate as the author of the Christian faith. Here in this latest assault upon the Divinity of Christ, we have it set before us what kind of human character is left to Him if his Sonship to God be denied. It is a singular result of this attempt to strip Christ of all Divine qualities and perfections, that it mars and mutilates his character even as a man. The two elements—the human, the Divine—are so inseparably interwoven, that you cannot take away the one and leave the other unimpaired. If Jesus be not one with the Father in the possession of Divine attributes, he can no longer be regarded as the type and model of a perfect humanity. A curious inquiry thus suggests itself into the modifications to which the humanity was subjected by its alliance with Divinity in the complex character of the Redeemer, and into the manner in which the

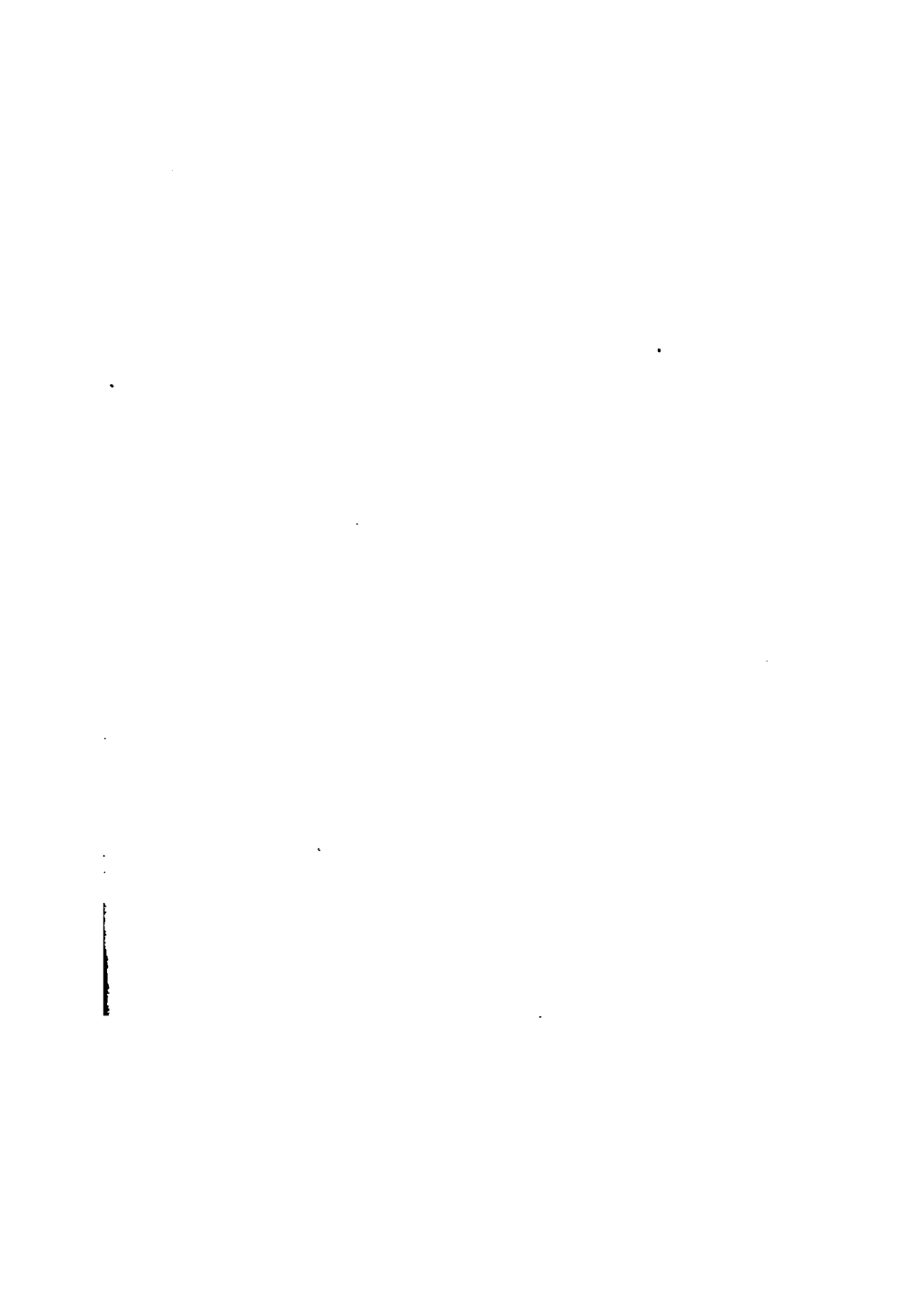
natural and the supernatural were woven together in his earthly history.

But without any controversial treatment, the evil which M. Renan's work is fitted to produce may be neutralized,—by a simple recital of the Life of Jesus, so as to show that the blending of the natural with the miraculous, the human with the Divine, is essential to the coherence and consistency of the record ; absolutely precluding such a conception of Christ's character as that which M. Renan has presented ; that the fabric of the Gospel history is so constructed that if you take out of it the Divinity of Jesus, the whole edifice falls into ruins. The writer ventures to hope that such a Life of Jesus as he meditates may at least partially serve this purpose, and be useful in promoting an intelligent and devout faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, as the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind.

W. HANNA.

EDINBURGH, 11th Nov. 1863.





I.

THE RESURRECTION.¹

WE left Mary Magdalene and the other Mary keeping their lonely watch over against the sepulchre till the sun of Friday sets. At its setting, Saturday, the great Sabbath of the Pass-over, begins. Such a Sabbath never dawned upon this world before or since. All things wear an outward look of quiet in Jerusalem. A great calm, a deeper than Sabbath stillness, has followed the stir and excitement of those strange scenes at Golgotha. Crowds of silent worshippers fill, as usual, the courts of the Temple; and all goes on, at the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice, as it had done for hundreds of years gone by. But can those priests, who minister within the Holy Place, gaze without some strange misgivings upon the rent in the veil from top

¹ Matt. xxvii. 62-66; xxviii. 1-6.

to bottom, which yesterday they had seen so strangely made, and which they scarce had time imperfectly to repair? Can they think without dismay of that rude uncovering of all the hidden mysteries of the most Holy Place, which they had witnessed? Among the crowds of worshippers without, there are friends and followers of Jesus. They would have been here, had nothing happened to their Master the day before, and they are here now, for, by keeping away, they might draw suspicion upon themselves; but what heart have they for the services of the Sanctuary? They have just had all their brightest earthly hopes smitten to the dust; and so prostrate are they beneath the stroke, that they cannot even recall to memory, that but a few months before, Jesus had, more than once, distinctly told them that he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. No writer of a fictitious story, no framer of a religious myth, had he previously put into Christ's lips such distinct foretellings of his death and resurrection, would have attri-

buted to his followers such an entire forgetfulness of these predictions, such an utter prostration of all faith and hope, as that which the Evangelists describe as coming upon all our Lord's disciples immediately after his death, lasting till the most extraordinary means were taken to remove them, and yielding slowly even then. Yet, after all, is it not true to human nature, that upon the minds and hearts of those simple, rude, uncultivated men and women, filled as they had been with other and quite different expectations, the shock of such a shameful death, coming in such a way upon their Master, was so sudden and so stunning, that all power of forming a new conception of their Master's character, and taking up a new faith in him, was gone ; the power even of remembering what he had said about himself beforehand for the season paralysed ?

But love lives on, even where faith dies out, among those disconsolate and utterly hopeless friends and followers of our Lord. While the two Marys had remained throughout the preceding day before the sepulchre, others of those Galilean women had hastened to occupy the short space

between the burial and the sunset, in beginning their preparations for the embalming of their Master's body. And these, with the two Marys, are waiting now, not without impatience ; for their hearts, not in the Temple services, have gone where they have seen him laid,—till the sunset, the close of the Sabbath, enables them to have all the needed wrappings, and spices, and ointments prepared, so that when the third morning dawns they may go out to Golgotha, to finish there at leisure what Joseph and Nicodemus had more hurriedly and imperfectly attempted, before they laid Jesus in the sepulchre.

But how, throughout this intervening Sabbath, fares it with the chief priests and rulers ? Are they quite at ease ; content and happy ; satisfied with, if not glorying in, their success ? They have got rid of this obnoxious man ; he is dead and buried. What fear can there be of him now ? What risk or danger to them, or to their supremacy, can come out of his grave ? May they not bury all their apprehensions in that closed sepulchre ? No ; a ghastly fear comes in to mar the joy of a gratified revenge. They dread

that dead man still ; he rules their spirits from his sepulchre. They would not cross Herod's threshold the day before, lest they should be defiled. They could not bear the thought that Jesus should hang suspended on the cross throughout the Sabbath-day ; it would disturb, it would desecrate the services of the Holy day, the Holy Place. But they scruple not to desecrate the Sabbath by their jealous fears ; by their secret councils ; by their plannings to prevent a future, dreaded danger. And so, no sooner is the Sabbath over, than they hasten to the Governor, saying to him :—"Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." They had themselves heard him, at the very beginning of his ministry, say publicly : "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again." They had heard him at a later period say : "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas : for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three


nights in the heart of the earth." Was it to these vague and general sayings of our Lord that the Rulers now referred? It is more likely that they had in view some of those more recent and more explicit declarations of Jesus to his own disciples, such as the one already quoted, or such as that other, and still more explicit one, when he took his disciples apart by the way, as they were going up to Jerusalem, and said to them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." What more natural than that the betrayer himself, to whose act such special allusion was thus made, should, in some of his communications with the Rulers, have repeated to them those memorable words? They now remember, while the disciples themselves forget. They fear, while the disciples have ceased to hope. When first reported to them, they had mocked at the unmeaning words; but now that so much of the prophecy has been accom-

plished, they begin to dread lest somehow or other the remainder of it should also be fulfilled. As yet all was safe; it was not till the third day that he was to rise again. During that Sabbath-day the body of the Crucified was secure enough in the sepulchre; the very sanctity of the day a sufficient guard against any attempt to invade the tomb. But instant means must be taken that thereafter there be no tampering with the place of burial. No night-guard could they get so good as a company of Roman soldiers whose iron rule of discipline imposed death upon the sentinel who slept at his post. Such guard they could get stationed at the sepulchre only under the Governor's sanction. "Command therefore," they said to Pilate, "that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." Little heeding either the first or the last error, having no sympathy with their idle fears about the rifling of the sepulchre, in no good humour either with

himself or with the Rulers, yet, since he had gone so far to please them, not caring to refuse their last request, Pilate complies. "Ye have a watch," he says; 'a detachment of my soldiers placed at your disposal during the feast, use it as you please; go your way, and, with its help, make the sepulchre of that poor, innocent Nazarene, you got me to crucify, as sure as ye can.' And they went their way. They passed a cord across the stone which filled the entrance into the sepulchre, and fastened it at each end to the adjoining rock with the sealing clay, so that the stone could not be removed and replaced, however carefully, in its first position, without leaving behind a mark of the disturbance. And they placed the sentinels, with the strict command that they were to suffer no man in the darkness to meddle with that sepulchre; and thus, securely guarded, the dead body of the Redeemer reposes.

The darkness deepens round the sepulchre, the sentinels kindle their night-lamps, and pace to and fro before it. The midnight hour has passed; it is yet dark. The day has but begun

to dawn, when those women, whose wakeful love sends them forth on their early errand, leave the Holy City to go out to Calvary to complete there the interrupted embalming. They are already near the spot, when a difficulty, not thought of till then, occurs to them. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? That stone which they had seen two nights before closely fitted into its place, was too large, too firmly embedded in its place for their weak hands to move, and at this hour, and at that spot, what aid of stronger hands can they obtain? Another difficulty there was; but of it happily they were ignorant, or it might have stopped their movement altogether. Of that sealing of the stone, of that guard planted the preceding day before the sepulchre, they had heard nothing, else they might have put to one another the further question, How, with such guard before it, shall we ever get access to the grave? It is as they are communing with one another by the way, that the earth quakes, and the angel descends from heaven, and rolls the stone back from the door



of the sepulchre, and, having done this service for the embalmers, sits down upon it, waiting their approach. Was it then that the great event of that morning took place? Was it as the angel's hand rolled back the stone, and opened the entrance of the tomb, that the Great Redeemer of mankind awoke, arose, and stepped forth from his temporary rest among the dead? It is not said so. The keepers did not witness the resurrection. They saw the angel, the light of his countenance, the snowy radiance of his raiment, and for fear of him they became as dead men. But they saw not the Lord himself come forth. The angel himself may not have witnessed the resurrection. He did not say he had. He speaks of it as an event already past. It may not have been as a spectator or minister to his Lord, in the act of rising from the dead, that he was sent down from heaven. The Lord of life needed not that service which he came to render. Through that stone door he could have passed as easily as he passed afterwards through other doors which barred not his entrances nor his exits. Altogether secret, the exact time and manner of the event,

unnoticed and unknown was that great rising from the dead. The clearest and amplest proof was afterwards given of the fact that, some time between sunset of the last and sunrise of the first day of the week, the resurrection had taken place; but it pleased not the Lord who then arose to do so under the immediate eye or inspection of any human witness.

Alarmed by the quaking of the ground beneath their feet, bewildered by the strange light which is seen streaming forth from beside the sepulchre, the women enter the garden, approach the sepulchre, gather courage as they see that the stone is already rolled away, but might have sunk again in terror as they looked at him who sat upon that stone, had he not prevented their fears by saying to them, in tones, let us believe, full of soothing power: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified"—"I know the errand that you come on. I know that it is love to the Crucified which brings you, thus early, to what was once his grave; and I have tidings of him that such love as yours will delight to hear. True, all that labour of yours about these spices

and ointments is lost; you will find here no body to embalm. But not lost this visit to the sepulchre; for to you first, among all his followers, have I to tell: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" and he led them into the sepulchre.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay." How little did the angel who first uttered these words, and heard the echo of them die away among the recesses of the rocky garden,—how little, perhaps, did he think that the invitation which he thus gave to those few trembling women who stood before him, would be conveyed down through all after times, and be borne to the ears of millions upon millions of the followers of Jesus Christ. And yet it has been even so, and in the course of its long descent and wide circulation, it has reached even unto us. Let us listen to and obey it. Come, let us look at the place where the Lord once lay, and from which on that third morning he arose.

We cannot indeed literally accept the angelic invitation, and go and look into the empty sepul-

chre. The hand of time, and in this instance the still rougher hands of the devotee and of the infidel, have wrought such changes in that sacred neighbourhood that the exact site of the holy sepulchre cannot be identified. But though we may not be able to plant our footsteps on the very ground that the trembling women occupied, or follow them as, angel led, they passed into the deserted tomb, yet in thought we may still bend over the place where the Lord once lay.

As we do so, let us reflect upon the proofs of the divine mission of the Redeemer afforded by his resurrection from the grave. Evidence enough had been afforded by our Lord himself, during his lifetime, of his divine character and authority. The words he spake, the works he did, proclaimed him to be the Son of the Highest. But sufficient as it was to convince the candid, that evidence had not been sufficient to silence the cavillers. His words were misunderstood and misinterpreted; his miracles, though not denied, were attributed to Satanic agency. It was as a blasphemer that he was put to death. But his resurrection appears at least to have had this effect, it stopped the

mouths of his adversaries. There might be a few among the more credulous of them who accepted the clumsy tale that the chief priests tried to circulate about his disciples coming by night and taking the body away. But loudly and publicly as, both in the heart of Jerusalem and elsewhere, the apostles proclaimed this fact in the presence of the Rulers themselves, it does not appear that its reality was ever openly challenged, or that any such attempt was made to explain it away as had been made regarding other miracles wrought by the Saviour's hands. If it failed to convince, it succeeded at least in silencing those who would, if they could, have dealt with it in a like manner.

It had indeed the force of a double miracle. Barely, and by itself, the rising of Jesus from the dead most fully authenticated the claims he had put forth. Had the Son of Mary not been all that he had declared himself to be, never would such an exercise of the Divine power have been put forth on his behalf. But more than this, Christ had publicly perilled his reputation as the Christ of God, on the occurrence of this

event. When challenged to give some sign in support of his pretensions, it was to his future resurrection from the dead, and to it alone, that he appealed. Often, as we have seen, and that in terms incapable of misconstruction, had our Lord foretold his resurrection. It carried thus along with it, a triple proof of the divinity of our Lord's mission. It was the fulfilment of a prophecy, as well as the working of a miracle ; that miracle wrought, and that prophecy fulfilled, in answer to a solemn and confident appeal made beforehand by Christ to this event as the crowning testimony to his Messiahship.

But not yet have we exhausted the testimony which the resurrection of Jesus embodies. He spoke of that resurrection as the raising of himself by himself. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. I lay down my life, that I may take it again. I have power to lay it down ; I have power to take it again." An assumption by Jesus Christ of a power proper to the Creator alone ; a clothing of himself with the high prerogatives of the giver and the restorer of life. His actual resurrection,

did it not in the most solemn manner ratify that assumption, convincing us by an instance of the highest kind, that whatsoever thing the Father doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise?

But further still—and it is this which attaches such importance to this incident in the history of our Redeemer, and causes it to be spoken of in the New Testament Scriptures as standing in such close connexion with all our dearest hopes as to the life beyond the grave,—in the resurrection of the Saviour, the seal of the Divine acceptance and approval was put upon that great work of service and of sacrifice, of atonement and of obedience in our room and stead, which Jesus finished on the cross. The expression and embodiment of that acceptance and approval in a visible act, an outward and palpable incident, gives an aid and a security to our faith in Christ for our acceptance with God, far beyond that which any bare announcement in words could possibly have conveyed. Can we wonder, then, at the prominence given, in the teachings and writings of the apostles of our Lord, to an event so full of convincing evidence, so rich in spiritual instruction

and comfort? To be a witness to this great event was held—as the election of Matthias informs us—to be the special function of the apostolic office. It was to this event that Peter referred at large in his discourse to the multitude on the day of Pentecost. “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” Questioned, a short time afterwards, before the Sanhedrim, as to the earliest of the apostolic miracles, “Be it known,” said Peter, “unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole.” When Paul addressed the men of Athens, this was the one supernatural incident to which, in the way of attestation, he referred: “God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” I have but to refer to the 15th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, to remind you of the place and prominence given to the event by the great apostle of the Gentiles: “If Christ be not risen, then


is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”¹

From the first, it was to that crowning miracle of Christianity that its teachers made appeal. And now once more, in our own times, it is by that event that we desire that the entire question of the supernaturalism of our religion should be decided ; for if that event be true, then any, then all other miracles are at least credible, for where among them shall a greater than this be found ? If that event be true, then upon it does the entire fabric of our Christian faith securely rest ; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then are we prepared along with this, and as harmonizing with this, to believe all that the Scriptures have taught us of the glory of Christ’s person, as one with, and equal to the Father ;—all that they have taught us of the design of his life and death among us, as the Redeemer of our souls from death,—the giver, the infuser, the nourisher, the maturer of that eternal life which is for our souls in him. Let us then be devoutly grateful for it, that our faith in him—in knowledge

¹ See Appendix A.

of whom, in union with whom standeth our eternal life—has such a solid foundation of fact to rest upon,—a foundation so firmly embedded among all those other foundations upon which our knowledge of the past reposes, that to unsettle, to overturn it, you must unsettle, must overturn them all.


“Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” that you may contemplate him, the one and only instance which this world hath witnessed of the last enemy, Death, being fairly met,—met in his own territory, triumphed over in his own domain, by the use of his own weapons. That grim, inexorable tyrant, wealth has never bribed, tears have never softened, beauty has never moved as he made his unfaltering approach, and struck his unerring blow. To and fro, wide over the vast field of humanity, has that sheer, cold scythe been ever swaying, and generation after generation has it laid low in the dust. Two only out of the many millions of our race—two in olden time were snatched away before the stroke of the destroyer came upon them, and passed away without tasting death. But the translation of



Enoch and Elijah was no victory over death ; they never met, they never grappled with this foe ; they were withdrawn from the battle-field before the day of conflict came. Some there were, too, in after times, who, subject for a season to the dominion of death, were delivered from his sway ; but neither was theirs the victory, for they had to return again, and bow once more beneath the yoke of the great conqueror. The widow's son, the ruler's daughter, and Lazarus whom Jesus loved, lie low as others in the caverns of the dead. One alone of human form ever grappled with that strong wrestler, Death, and cast him from him overcome. His way to conquest lay through brief submission. Like others, he descended into the dark and dreary prison-house. The grave opened to receive him. He seemed to have passed away, as the multitudes who had gone before. But Death and the Grave never received such a visitant into their silent and vast domains. He approached the throne of the tyrant, to wrench the sceptre of empire from his hand. In bursting, as he did, the barriers of the grave, it was no mere respite that he obtained

for himself, but a full and final victory. He bade adieu that morning to the sepulchre for ever. He left no trophy behind ; nothing of his in the hands of death ; nothing but that empty sepulchre to tell that he had once, and for a short season, been under the hold of the destroyer. Even had this been a solitary conquest, though the sepulchre of Jesus were to remain for ever as the only one from which the tenant came forth alive, to return to it no more,—still would we draw near to muse upon this one triumph of humanity over the last enemy.

But we have all a nearer, a more special interest in this deserted tomb of Jesus Christ. His was no solitary, isolated victory over the grave. For us he died, and for us he rose again. Firm and fast as the grave now seems to hold the buried generations of our race, it is now doomed, as a fruit of Christ's resurrection, to relax its grasp, and yield them up again. Empty as was Joseph's sepulchre when the angel stood before it and invited the women to enter, so empty shall one day be every grave of earth, when another angel shall sound his trumpet, and it



shall ring through all the regions of the dead, and stir all to life again. . Blessed was that morning which dawned upon the empty tomb at Calvary, but more blessed to us shall that other morning be, which shall dawn upon all the emptied graves of earth, if only now we live in Christ ; if at death we sleep in Jesus ; if at that resurrection we be numbered with those who shall share the resurrection of the just.

II.

APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE.¹

IN relating the incidents of the resurrection, St. Matthew tells us that it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who, as the first day of the week began to dawn, went out to the sepulchre. St. Mark mentions Salome as having accompanied them. St. Luke introduces the additional name of Joanna. St. John speaks of Mary Magdalene, and of her only. On the supposition that a number of those women who came with Jesus from Galilee had agreed to complete as early as possible the embalming of his body, and that they had either started together from the city, or, being in different parts of it the night before, had fixed to meet at early dawn at the sepulchre, we can readily enough understand that each of the four independent narrators might name one or more

¹ John xx. 1-18.

of them without specifying the others. Looking, however, a little more closely into the four separate accounts, we notice that, according to Matthew, the women on their arrival found the stone removed from the entrance of the sepulchre, and an angel sitting upon it, who invited them to enter and look at the place where the Lord had lain. Mark, making no allusion to any vision of an angel without, says that they passed into the sepulchre, and, on entering, saw "a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a long white garment," who addressed to them nearly the same words which Matthew puts into the mouth of the angel seen sitting upon the stone. Luke tells us that, finding the stone rolled away, they entered in and found the sepulchre empty, and as they stood perplexed at the discovery, "behold, two men stood by them in shining garments," and spoke to them in terms and in a tone differing considerably from that attributed to the single angel by the first two evangelists. It appears again, from the narrative of John, that Mary Magdalene had seen no angel, had heard at least no announcement that the Lord was actually alive, when she

hurried off from the sepulchre in search of Peter and John. What are we to make of these discrepancies? Was it sometimes one and sometimes two angels that appeared; were some eyes opened and some eyes shut to the angelic visions? Was it one visit, or two, or more, by the same or different groups of women, which were paid to the sepulchre? Various attempts to answer such questions have been made; various suppositions have been framed, the adoption of which, it has been thought, would relieve the different accounts from conflicting with one another; various modes of interlacing them, so as to form out of them a continuous and consistent narrative, have been presented. If it cannot be said that they have all absolutely failed, it must be said that not one of them is entirely satisfactory. We cannot doubt that if all the minor and connecting links were in our hands, we should be able to explain what now seems to be obscure, to harmonize what now seems to be conflicting; but in the absence of such knowledge, we must be content to take what each writer tells us, and regard it as the broken fragments of a whole,

all the parts of which are not in our hands, so that we can put them connectedly together. But is not this fragmentary character of each of these four separate accounts just what we might have expected, considering the time and manner of the events narrated,—the obscure light, the women coming, it may have been singly, or in different groups by different routes, the surprise, the terror, the running in and out, to and from the city—all this within the compass of an hour or two? Which one of the spectators or actors in these busy and broken movements, if asked afterwards to detail what occurred, but might have given an account of it differing from that of all the others? And if any two of these independent sources of information were applied to or made use of, how readily might apparent contradictions emerge upon the face of the narratives that were afterwards preserved. We do not know from what particular sources Matthew, Mark, and Luke derived their information. This special interest, however, attaches to the narrative of John,—it is partly that of an eye-witness, and partly drawn, we cannot doubt, from what was

told him by Mary Magdalene herself. Over-looking the part taken by all the other women, John confines himself exclusively to her. Even as our Lord himself singled her out from among the women who had ministered to him, to make to her his first appearance after his resurrection, so does the beloved disciple speak of her alone while he details to us the incidents of that wonderful manifestation.

We feel as if a great injustice had been done to Mary Magdalene, in identifying her with the woman who was a sinner, who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. The name of that woman is not mentioned in the record of the incident in which she took so prominent a part. The incident occurred not in Magdala but at Nain. It was after Christ had left Nain that the first mention of this Mary meets us in the gospel narrative: "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had

been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Named thus along with one whose husband held an important office in Herod's household, named as one of those who ministered to our Lord of their substance, Mary Magdalene does not appear to have been a woman of a low or poor condition. Neither have we any right to ground upon the fact that seven devils had been cast out of her, the conclusion that she had been a woman of depraved or dissolute habits. Satanic possession carried then no more evidence along with it of previous immorality, than insanity would do now among ourselves.

But whoever, whatever this Mary was, she was, as we have already seen, one of the latest at the sepulchre on the evening of the burial, and now she is one of the earliest at that sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection. Perhaps, more eager than the rest, she had hurried on before, and entered the garden alone. A quick glance, that waited not to catch even the

sight of the angel's form, had shown her that the entrance was open, and the sepulchre empty. Overwhelmed with sorrow at the sight; waiting not to hear the angel's intimation that He had risen; leaping at once to the conclusion that hostile hands had rifled the sacred tomb, her troubled fancy picturing to her the indignities to which that form, beloved even in its lifelessness, might have been subjected,—Mary hurries back to the city. She seeks the house to which John had carried the mother of our Lord. She finds there both John and that other apostle, whom a strange attraction has drawn now to John's side. She has but breath enough to say, "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him." Her eagerness of alarm passes, by sympathy, into the hearts of the two apostles. They arise to run out together to the sepulchre. John's lighter footstep, quickened by his more ardent, more unburdened love, carries him soonest to the spot; but, at the entrance, his deep and reverential spirit holds him back in awe. He stops, and bends, and looks into the grave. Peter, of slower

step, and still labouring, it may have been, under the burden of self-reproach, is behind John in the race ; but, bolder or more impetuous, he stops not at the door, but, passing John, goes at once into the sepulchre. He draws his brother apostle after him, the one never dreaming of the influence he thus exerts, the other as little thinking of the influence he obeys. Both are now within, and have leisure to look round upon the place. There the linen clothes are lying, with which Joseph and Nicodemus had swathed the body, and there, not loosely flung upon them in a disordered heap, but carefully folded up in a place by itself, lies that napkin which Mary herself may have helped to bind around the thorn-marked brow. Who had arranged them thus ? Was it the hand of the great Sleeper himself, on his awakening within the tomb ? or was it some angel's hand that took the death garments, as they dropped from around the risen one, and thus disposed them ? Whoever did it, there had been no haste ; all had been done calmly, collectedly. Neither earthly friends nor earthly foes had done it : the one would not

have stripped the garments from the body ; the other would have been at no pains so carefully to arrange and deposit them. Peter, as he looks, is amazed, but his amazement shapes itself into no connected thought ; he departs wondering in himself at that which had come to pass. John's quieter and deeper reflection suggests at once the idea that what has taken place is not a removal, but a reanimation of the body. An incipient faith in the resurrection forms within his breast ; a faith grounded, not as it might have been, and should have been, on what he had already read or heard—for as yet neither he nor any of the apostles knew from the Scripture, nor believed from Christ's own word, that he must rise again from the dead,—but grounded simply on what he saw, and especially upon the singular condition which the interior of the sepulchre displayed. That rising faith, John kept to himself ; he never boasted that he was the first of all the Twelve to believe in the resurrection. Perhaps, his first public mention of the fact was when, so many years afterwards, he sat down to write that Gospel which bears his name.

The brief inspection of the empty sepulchre over—there being nothing more to see or learn --John and Peter return silent and sad to their own home. Mary Magdalene had followed them, as best she could, in the running out to the sepulchre ; but she does not join them in their return. Two evenings before (when all but she and the other Mary had left the tomb into which she had seen the body borne for burial), she had clung to it to the last, and this morning, she clings to it still. The Master whom she had lost, had rendered her the greatest of services ; had been to her the kindest and best of friends. Her grateful love had clung to him while living ; and now this love, living in her sorrow, makes her cling, even when John has left it, to the spot where in death he had reposed. Mary Magdalene, standing alone weeping thus before the empty sepulchre, presents herself to our eye as the saddest and most inconsolable of all the mourners for the Crucified. As she weeps, she stoops to take another look into the deserted place. She sees a sight that might well have diverted her from her grief—two angels sitting, the one at the head, the

other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They say to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Did you ever read of a more absorbing grief than that she, who was addressed thus by angels, should have no surprise, no astonishment to spare; but, as if unheeding who they were that spoke to her, should, out of the depths of her engrossing sorrow, only be able to repeat what she had said to Peter and John, varying the phrase a little—claiming a closer property in the departed—"Because they have taken away *my Lord*, and I know not where they have laid him." And she turns away, even from an interview with angels, from converse with those who may have had as their purpose in putting to her that question, to tell her about her risen Lord. She turns away even from them, to weep out, without further interruption, her most bitter grief.

But now, from other lips, the same question, "Woman, why weepest thou?" salutes her ear. She sees, but scarcely notices, the person who thus speaks to her. He is not directly before her, and she cares not to turn, or make any minute scrutiny of his person. Even had she

done so, seeing him through the veil of dropping tears, she might have failed to recognise him. She cares as little, in fact, about who this speaker is, as she had cared about who those angels were. Taking him to be one who did not need to be told why she wept, who must know all about what had happened—the gardener of the place—she says to him, in the simplest, most artless way, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She is willing even to believe that it was with no unkindly purpose he had been removed. Only let her know where he is ; and, all forgetful how unfit her weak hands were for such a task, she says,—I will take him away. ‘If it be an offence that he lies here in this rich man’s tomb, so near the holy city, I will bear him away to some remoter burial-place, where he may lie in peace, and where I may go and weep at will over his grave.’

Jesus saith unto her, “*Mary.*” The old familiar voice ! It can be only He who names her so. Instantly—fully—the revelation of his living presence bursts upon her. She turns, and forget-

ting all about the new strange circumstances in which she sees him, as if the former days of their familiar intercourse had returned,—she says, Rabboni ! and is about to clasp him to her arms. Jesus stops the movement. “Touch me not,” he says, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father ; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.” This check upon the ardour of Mary’s affectionate approach in the first moments of recognition, we can only understand by reflecting upon the object of our Lord’s sojourn upon the earth for the forty days after his resurrection.

There is a mystery which hangs around this singular period in the life of our Redeemer. Why did he tarry so long upon the earth, when his work appeared to have been finished ? What peculiar service did that keeping empty so long his seat at his Father’s right hand render to his church and people ? During the first eight days, on the first and last of which alone he showed himself in Jerusalem ; was he treading unseen the streets of the holy city, or haunting the

household of the loved family of Bethany? Their midnight hours; did they see him once again amid the dark shadows of Gethsemane, praying now, not that the cup might be taken from him, but that the fruits of his bygone passion might be gathered in? The Sabbaths of these days; did they see him entering again the Temple, passing behind the rent veil into the Holy of Holies, quenching with his unseen hand, and that for ever, the fire that had burned above the mercy-seat? During the weeks which followed, was he wandering an unseen spectator over the scenes of his earthly ministry; re-visiting Nazareth, re-entering Capernaum, where most of his mighty works had been done, looking in with kindly eye upon that nobleman's family, all of whom had believed in him; going out to Cana, casting a passing glance at the dwelling in which the first of his miracles had been performed; lingering for a moment by the gate of the little city of Nain, blessing once more, as he passed, the widow and her recovered child?

It is an idle task, perhaps, for fancy to pic-


ture where or how those forty days were spent. But it is not an unprofitable question for us to put to ourselves, what ends could his lingering so long on earth have served? It cannot be supposed that the mere object of affording proof enough that he was still alive, would have detained him here so long. That could have been done in two days as well as in forty. Besides, had that been the main object of his delay, why did he not appear oftener in a more open and public manner than he did? Neither can it be imagined, that it was for the purpose of continued and enlarged intercourse with his disciples. The fewness and shortness of the interviews with them preclude that belief. He was seen by them but ten times in all;¹ five of those appearances occurring on the day of his resurrection; and four of them, those to Mary, to Peter, to James, to the two disciples, having more of a private than of a public character. Out of the forty days there were but six on which he held intercourse with any human being, and in those six days he did not give more than as many hours to fellowship with those to whom he

¹ See Appendix B.

showed himself. How brief, too, generally, and abrupt the meetings that made up the hours which were so employed ! In the twilight of the garden ; in the dim-lighted upper chamber ; in the grey dawn of the lake side, he appears, speaks but a few sentences, and vanishes as mysteriously as he had appeared. All betokens a studied effort to stand aloof, to shun all close, prolonged, familiar intercourse. What impression was all this studied distance and reserve fitted to make upon the minds of his disciples ? Put yourselves into their exact position at this time ; remember that not one of them before his death had risen to any thought or belief in his divinity ; that from all their earlier earthly notions of him they had to be weaned ; that after days and years of the easiest companionship with him, they had to be raised to the belief that it was the very Lord of heaven and earth with whom they had been holding converse ; yet, that belief was to be so formed within them, as not to militate against the idea of his true and proper humanity. See, then, what an important part in the execution of this needful, but most difficult task, must have been fulfilled

by his mode of dealing with them during the forty days.

For, let us only conceive what should have happened, if one or other of the two alternatives had been realized : if at once, after a few interviews, sufficient simply to do away with all doubt as to his resurrection, Jesus had passed up into the heavens, never to be seen again on earth ; let us imagine that the descent of the Spirit had immediately thereon ensued ; that the day of Pentecost had followed immediately on the day of the resurrection ; that the eyes of the apostles had thus at once and fully been enlightened, and the great truth of their Master's Godhead had been flashed upon their minds ; the danger undoubtedly would have been that, seen in the blaze of that new glory, shining thus around his person, the man Christ Jesus had been lost, the humanity swallowed up in the divinity ; nor would it have been so easy to persuade those men that, ascended up on high, seated at the right hand of the Father, he was the same Jesus still,—a brother to them as truly as when he lived among them, equally alive to all human sympathies as when he walked



with them by the way, or sat down with them in the upper chamber.

Take, again, the other alternative ; that after his resurrection, Christ had immediately resumed and continued—even let us say for no longer a time than these forty days—the exact kind of life that he had led before, returning to all his old haunts and occupations ; spending a day or two with Lazarus and his sister at Bethany ; travelling up through Samaria, and sitting wearied by the well's mouth, as before ; living in Peter's wife's sister's house, dining with Pharisees ; crossing the Lake in the fishing-boat ; accompanying with multitudes on mountain-sides ; living and acting outwardly in every respect as he had done before,—would not such a return on his part to all the old familiarities of his former intercourse, have had a tendency to check the rising faith in his divinity ; to tie his disciples down again to a knowing of him only after the flesh ; to give to the humanity of the Lord such bulk and prominence as to make it in their eyes overshadow the divinity ? Can you conceive a treatment more nicely fitted to the spiritual condition, to the

spiritual wants of those men at that time, than the very one which the Lord adopted and carried out,—so well fitted as it was, gradually, gently, without violence (as is ever the mode of his acting in all the provinces of his spiritual empire), to lead those disciples on from their first misty, imperfect, unworthy ideas of his person, character, and work, on and up to clearer, purer, loftier conceptions of Him? In what better way could a faith in their Master's divinity have been superinduced upon their former faith in him as a man, a friend, a brother, so that the two might blend together without damage done to either by the union; their knowledge of him as human, not interfering with their trust in him as divine; their faith in him as God, not weakening their attachment to him as man?

With this key in our hand—a key which unlocks much of the mystery of our Lord's conduct throughout those forty days—let us return to Mary in the garden. She sees Jesus alive once more before her. She hears him as of old call her by her name. He is hers, she thinks again; hers, as he had been before; hers, not to be torn from

her again. All the warmth of those former days of familiar friendship filling her glad heart, she offers him not the homage of a higher worship ; but, addressing him as he did her, " Rabboni," she says,—my own, my old, my well-loved Master ! She makes some gesture as of embracing him. Gently, but firmly, our Lord repels the too warm, too human, too familiar approach. " Touch me not, Mary." ' You think of me as given back to be to you the same exactly that I was before. You are mistaken ; our relationship is changed ; our method of intercourse must be altered ; you must learn to think of me, and to act towards me, differently from what you ever did before ; I am here, but it is only for a short season ; I am on earth, but I am now on the way to my Father ; my home is no longer with you and the others here below, it is there with my Father up in heaven ; still shall I feel to you, and all the others as tenderly as I ever felt, not ashamed even to call them still my brethren. Touch me not, then, Mary ; stop not to lavish on me an affection that has in it too much of the human, too little of the divine ; but go to my brethren, and say unto them,

I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God, and your God ;—my Father and my God in a sense in which he is not and cannot be yours ; but your Father and your God in a sense in which he could not have been yours had I not died and risen, and been on my way now to sit down with Him on the throne of glory in the heavens.'

III

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.¹

It was towards evening; the day was far spent when the two disciples reached Emmaus; yet there was time enough for them, after they had dined, to return by day-light to Jerusalem (a distance of about seven miles, a two or three hours' walk) and to be present at that evening meeting, in the midst of which Jesus was seen by them once more. It must have been between mid-day and sunset that the journey to Emmaus was taken. Of the two travellers, the name of one only has been preserved; that of Cleopas, generally believed to have been a near relation of Christ—the husband of the Virgin Mary's sister. It was not, however, the closeness of the relationship to Jesus which won for

¹ Luke xxiv. 13-33.

him the privilege of that strange conversation by the way. Had nearness of relationship had anything to do with the matter, there was one surely to whom, above all others, we might have expected that he would appear on the day of his resurrection. Yet neither on that day, nor on any of the forty days he spent on earth thereafter, does Jesus seem to have made any special manifestation of himself to his mother, or indeed to have taken any individual notice of her whatever. Her name does not once occur in the record of this period of our Redeemer's life. It looks as if with that kindly, son-like notice of her from the cross, Jesus had dropped the recognition of the earthly relationship altogether, as one not suitable to be carried into that kingdom to whose throne he was about to ascend.

And as it was nothing in their outward relationship to Jesus, so neither was it anything in the personal character, position, or services of these two men which drew down upon them this great favour from the Lord. They had occupied no prominent place beside the Saviour in the course of his ministry. They had exhibited

no peculiar strength of attachment to him, or to his cause. Had Peter and James and John been the travellers, it would not have been so remarkable that he should have given them so many of the hours of that first day of his resurrection life; more hours, in fact, than he ever gave to any two disciples besides; nay, so far as we can measure them, more hours than he gave to any other interview of that period,—perhaps as many as were spent in all the other interviews together, for generally they were very brief. What was there in these two men to entitle them to such a distinction? They were not apostles, nor were they of any great note among the seventy. Our Lord's first words to them may perhaps help us to understand why it was that he joined himself to them. He has been walking beside them, so close as to overhear somewhat of their conversation. But they are so intent upon the topic that engrosses them, that they notice not that a stranger has overtaken them, and been in part a listener to their discourse. At last, in manner the easiest and most natural, least calculated to

give offence, expressive at once of interest and sympathy, Jesus breaks in upon their discourse with the inquiry, "What manner of communications are these that ye have to one another, as ye walk and are sad?" That sadness, who can tell what power it had in drawing the Man of sorrows to their side? It was to Mary, weeping in her lonely grief; to Peter, drowned in tears of penitence,—that he had already appeared. And now it is to these two disciples in their sorrow that he joins himself: so early did the risen Saviour assume the gracious office of comforting those who mourn, of binding up the broken heart. But in Mary, Peter, and these two disciples, three different varieties of human grief were dealt with. Mary's was the grief of a grateful and affectionate heart, mourning the loss of one beloved; Peter's was the grief of a spirit smitten with the sense of a great offence committed; the grief of the two disciples was that of men disappointed, perplexed, thrown into despondency and unbelief. It is especially noticed that it was while they communed together, and reasoned with one another, that Jesus himself drew near to them.

There was much about which they well might differ and dispute. The yielding of their Master to the power of his enemies, and his shameful crucifixion two days before,—how could they reconcile with his undoubted pretensions and power, as a prophet so mighty in words and deeds? This one, that other saying of his, pointing to a future, never now, as they fancied, to be realized, what could they make of them? Had Jesus himself been disappointed, deceived; had he imagined that the people would rise on his behalf, and prevent his crucifixion? That might have been, had he not so often shown that he knew all that was passing in men's hearts. Could he, then, have been ignorant how the multitude of Jerusalem would feel and act? There was truth, too, in what so many of them had flung reproachfully in his teeth, as he hung upon the cross: He had saved others, why did he not save himself? What a confused heap of difficulties must have risen up before these two men's eyes as they reasoned by the way! And then besides, there was what they had heard just before they left the city,—the report of some

women that they had gone out, and found the sepulchre empty, and had seen angels, who told them that he was alive. They, indeed, might easily have been deceived ; but Peter and John had also gone out. It is true they had seen no angels, nor had any one, that they had heard of, seen the Lord himself. But the sepulchre had been found empty. The women were right so far ; were they right also in what they said about the angel's message? Could Jesus actually be alive again? We wonder that these two men could have left the city at the time they did ; we wonder at this perhaps the more because we know that, had they but waited an hour or two longer, they would have had all their doubts resolved. It is clear enough, however, that neither of them had any faith in the resurrection ; and as clear that they were dissatisfied with their unbelief—altogether puzzled and perplexed. Ignorant, they needed to be taught ; deeply prejudiced, they needed to have their prejudices removed. For hours and hours, for days and days, they might have remained together without clearing up the difficulties that beset them. But now, in pity and in

love, the great Enlightener himself appears—appears in the garb of a stranger who joins them by the way. They do not at first, they do not all through the earnest conversation which follows, recognise him.


In reading the accounts of all the different appearances of Christ after his resurrection, the conviction seems forced upon us, that some alteration had taken place in the aspect of our Saviour, enough to create a momentary hesitation in recognising him, yet not enough after a closer inspection, to leave any doubt as to his identity. In the garden, Mary Magdalene was so absorbed in her sorrow, so utterly unprepared to meet the living Master—she looked so indirectly, with such a heedless glance at the stranger, whom she took to be the gardener—that we do not wonder at her failing to see at first who he was. So soon, however, as her name was uttered, and she turned and fixed that steadier look upon the speaker, the recognition was complete. To the women by the way, to whom next he showed himself, his very salutation revealed him, and left them no room for doubting that it was he. They held

him by the feet, too, for a moment or two, as they worshipped, and got the evidence of touch as well as sight to assure them of his bodily presence. That evening, in the upper chamber, the disciples were assembled. They could not be taken by surprise. They were prepared by the reports of Mary Magdalene, of the women, of Peter, of the two disciples from Emmaus, to believe that he was alive ; yet when Jesus stood in the midst of them, they supposed that they had seen a spirit ; so troubled were they at the sight, so incredulous were they even as they looked at him, that he had to say to them, “ Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your heart ? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself ; handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have ;” and still further, to remove all doubt, he asked that some meat should be presented, and he took the piece of the broiled fish and the honey-comb, and did eat them in their presence. It may have been the sudden apparition of Christ in the midst of them, while the doors of the chamber remained unopened, which, in part, begot the belief that it was a spirit that stood

before them ; but that there was something too in the changed appearance of their Master, which helped to sustain that belief, is evident, from what is told us of his next appearance by the lake side of Galilee. John's quick eye and ear recognised him from the boat ; but when they had all landed and gathered round him, "None of them," it is said, "durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Whence the desire to put such a question, but from a passing shadowy doubt, and whence the doubt but from some change in his appearance? When afterwards, on the mountain which he had appointed, Jesus showed himself to above five hundred brethren at once, they saw him, and worshipped ; but some, it is said, doubted,—those, let us believe, who saw him then for the first and only time, and on whom the sight seems to have had the same effect that it had in the first instance on nearly all who witnessed it. It seems to us the best, if not the only way of accounting for this, to suppose that the resurrection body of our Lord had passed through a stage or two in its transition from the natural into the spiritual


body ; from its condition as nailed upon the cross, to its etherealized and glorified condition as now upon the throne ; the flesh and blood which cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom, still there, yet so modified as to be more plastic under the power of the indwelling spirit, less subject to the material laws and conditions of its earlier being, the corruptible on its way to the incorruptible, the mortal putting on the clothing of immortality. And that strange, half spiritual appearance which the risen Lord presented, may it not have served to further the great end that our Lord had in view throughout the forty days, namely, to wean the minds of his disciples from their earlier, lower, more human conceptions of him, to a true faith in his mingled humanity and divinity ?

There was, however, something special, I believe, in this instance of the two disciples travelling to Emmaus. They might not have recognised him, as, clothed perhaps in the garb of an ordinary traveller, he put his first questions to them by the way ; but when he assumed the office of their instructor, and, showing such intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, made their hearts




burn within them, as he unfolded their new meaning, must they not many a time have turned on him a very searching look, wondering as they looked, who this strange teacher possibly could be? Yet were two or three hours spent in that close and earnest conversation, without their once suspecting that it was the Lord. How accurately does this accord with the differing statements of Mark and Luke! Mark distinctly tells us that he appeared to them in another, in a strange form,—a form different from that in which they had seen him previously. He appeared to them, as to all the others, somewhat changed in aspect; but had that been all, they would speedily have recovered from their first surprise, and ere many minutes would have identified him. For a reason, however, hereafter to be alluded to, our Lord purposely concealed himself till his work of instruction was completed, and drew a veil of some kind over their eyes, which hindered their discovery of him by the way.

He comes to them as an entire stranger; such as they might naturally have met upon the road, and it is as a stranger that throughout he con-



verses with them. "What manner of communications," he says, "are those that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Little need thought one of them (his own deep interest in them leading him, perhaps, to exaggerate that felt by the general community)—little need of asking such a question. Of what could any two men leaving Jerusalem, only two days after that crucifixion had occurred,—of what else than of it, and him the Crucified, could they be talking? "Art thou only," says Cleopas, "a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And the stranger says to him, What things? Thus it is, by questions needless for him on his own account to put, but very useful to them to answer, that Jesus draws out from them that statement, which at once reveals the extent of their ignorance and incredulity, but, at the same time, the amount of their belief, the strength of their attachment to Christ, and the bitterness of that grief which the disappointment of their expectations regarding him had created. A stranger though this man is to them, they do not hesitate to confess their faith



in Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet mighty in words and deeds ; obnoxious as they know the now hated sect to be, they do not hesitate to acknowledge themselves openly as disciples of this persecuted and now crucified Nazarene, though the hope they once had, that he should have been the Redeemer of Israel, they must confess themselves to have relinquished. Nay, so far has the kindly and sympathizing inquiry of this stranger won for him a way into their confidence, that, as if he must be interested in all that concerned the discipleship of Jesus, they tell him what certain women of their company, and certain others of themselves, had reported about the sepulchre.


The stranger's end is gained. The wound has been gently probed ; its nature and extent revealed ; and now the remedy is to be applied. He who had asked to be informed, takes the place of the instructor ; he who had been reproached for his ignorance, reproaches in his turn. " O fools, and slow of heart to believe ! " Slow of heart indeed, and difficult to convince had they been, who, after such explicit decla-

rations of his own beforehand, that he should be delivered up to the Rulers, and suffer many things at their hands, and be crucified, and rise again the third day, had nevertheless remained so obstinate in their incredulity. Truly the rebuke was needed. Yet how faithful are the wounds of a friend; he wounds but to heal; he rebukes the unbelief, but instantly proceeds to remove its grounds, even as he rose from his slumber in the storm-tossed fishing-boat, first to rebuke the disciples for their unbelieving fears, and then to quiet the tempest, which had produced them. The one great, misleading prejudice of the disciples had been their belief that the path of the promised Messiah was only to be one of triumph and of glory. To rectify that error, it was only required that they should be made to see that the predicted triumph and glory were alone to be reached through the dark avenues of suffering and of death. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them

in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Either Christ, then, is not himself to be believed—in which case it were useless to hear and read anything about him—or in those Old Testament Scriptures there are to be seen everywhere prophetic fingers pointing forward to Him. To search those Scriptures, and to find little or nothing there of Christ, little or nothing to show how it behoved him to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, is to handle them after a very different fashion from that in which they were handled by our Lord himself.

It is not likely that these three travellers had a copy of the Old Testament in their hands. It was not by reference to chapter and verse, that the exposition of the Saviour was conducted; it was by no minute criticism of words and phrases, that the conviction of these wayfaring men was carried. They were familiar generally with the Scriptures. One or two of the leading prophecies about the Messiah, such as that first one of God himself in paradise, as to the seed of the woman and the serpent; such as that of Moses as to the raising up of a prophet like

unto himself ; such as that of Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and testified beforehand of the sufferings by which that glory should be preceded and entered ; such as that of Daniel about the Messiah being cut off, but not for himself,—Jesus may have quoted. But not alone from direct and specific prophecies—from the paschal lamb, and the smitten rock, and the serpent of brass, and the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, but from the whole history of the Jewish people—from the entire circle of types and ceremonies and sacrifices, did Jesus draw forth the materials of that wonderful exposition by which, for two hours or so, he kept those listening men hanging upon his lips. As we think who the expounder in that instance was, and what the materials of his exposition, how natural the expression,—Would that I had heard all these things concerning Christ illustrated by Christ himself ! But have we not the substance of that exposition, as much of it as is needful for us to have, preserved in the writings of the New Testament, and may we not be sure that if we believe not them, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead, as Jesus that



morning had done, and should teach us even as he taught those two disciples ?

There was something indeed peculiarly, sublimely interesting in that two hours' walk and talk of these three men on the way to Emmaus. Had you been on that road that day, had you met those travellers as they journeyed on, beyond the earnestness of their conversation with one another, you would have seen nothing remarkable about them, nothing to make you turn and look back upon them as they passed. Two of them are men in humble attire, travelling in the humblest fashion, returning to one of the humblest village-homes : and the third, there is nothing about him different in appearance from the other two ; nothing to keep them from conversing with him as an equal, one with whom the most unrestrained familiarity might be used. Yet who is He ? He who that very morning had burst the barriers of the grave ; he in honour of whose exit from the tomb angels from heaven had been despatched to watch at the foot and at the head of the sacred spot, where in death his body had for a time reposed ; he who was now upon

his way to enter into that glory which he had with the Father before the world was,—Incarnate Deity fresh from the conflicts and the victories of the garden, the cross, the sepulchre. It is literally God walking with men, men walking, though they knew it not, with God. History tells us of earthly sovereigns stripping themselves at times of all the tokens and trappings of royalty, for the purpose of mixing on equal terms with the humblest of their people ; but history never told, and imagination never pictured, a disguise, an *incognito* like this. But why was that disguise adopted, and, in this instance, so long preserved ? Why, instead of doing as he did with the eleven, first manifesting himself, and then opening their understanding to understand the Scriptures, did he keep himself unknown all the time that the work of exposition was going on ? May it not have been to obtain such a simple, natural, easy access for the truth into those two men's minds and hearts, as to give it, even when unsupported by the weight of his own personal authority, a firmer and securer hold ? Whatever may have been its more special object as regards the two disciples,

wonderful indeed was that condescension of our Lord which led him to give so many hours of his first resurrection-day to this humble office. Many a proud scribe in Jerusalem would have recoiled from it, have deemed it a waste of his precious time, if asked to accompany two such humble men, and spend so much of one of his Sabbaths in instructing them out of the Scriptures. The Divine Redeemer himself thought it not a task too lowly ; and by devoting, in his own person, so much of that first Christian Sabbath to it, has he not at once left behind him a pattern of what all true and faithful exposition of the sacred Scriptures ought to be, even the unfolding of the things touching a once crucified, but now exalted Saviour ; and has he not dignified, by himself engaging in it, the work of one man's trying, at any time, or in any way, to lead another to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus ?

It was with heavy hearts that the two disciples had left Jerusalem ; and had all the journey been like the first few paces of it, it had seemed a long way to Emmaus. But they are at the village now, and the road had never appeared

so short. Had they imagined they could be there so soon, they would have lingered on the road. And now this stranger, whose discourse had so beguiled the way, and made their hearts so burn within them, makes as if he would go farther. Emmaus, it would seem, is not his resting-place. But how can they part from him? How may that conversation, which has shed such a fresh light into their understandings, such a new hope into their hearts, be prolonged? They invite, they urge him to remain. He gives, he makes the opportunity for their constraining him to be their guest. He acts as he had done with the two blind beggars; with the disciples in the storm; with the Syrophenician woman. He suffers violence to be used with him; and then, when he has brought out all the strength of desire and affection towards him in the earnest entreaty, he yields to the urgency he had himself excited. The two disciples constrain him, and he goes in apparently to abide with them. They have him now, as they think, with them for the whole evening; and what an evening it shall be, when, supper over, the conversation of the wayside may

be renewed. The humble table is quickly spread. This is the home, it has been thought, of one of the two disciples, and he whose home it is prepares to do the duty of the host. That duty is taken out of his hands. The mysterious stranger takes the bread; he blesses, he breaks, he gives. Who but One could bless and break, and give in such a way as this? The scales fall from the disciples' eyes. 'Tis he, their own lost but now recovered Lord and Master. Let him wait but a moment or two, they shall be clasping him, as Mary would fain have done, to their hearts, or, falling down, as the women did, and worshipping at his feet. Time is not given them. He reveals himself, and disappears. This moment known by them, the next vanishing from their sight.

IV.

THE EVENING MEETING.¹

WHEN they left Jerusalem on the afternoon of the first day of the week, the two disciples had intended to remain that night, perhaps permanently, at Emmaus. The Paschal Sabbath over, they had resolved to return to their village home,—to their old way of living, burying, as best they could, their expectations disappointed. But the conversation by the way, the manifestation in the breaking of bread, that revealed and vanishing presence of their risen Lord, altered the whole current of their thoughts and acts. They could not stay at Emmaus. Late as it was, they instantly arose and returned to Jerusalem. How quickly, how eagerly would they retrace their steps ! What manner of communications would those be that they would now

¹ Mark xvi. 13, 14 ; Luke xxiv. 33-49 ; John xx. 19-23.

have with one another; how different from those which Jesus had interrupted; the incredulity turned now into faith, the sadness into joy. The stranger who had made their hearts burn within them, on their way out to the village, he too was traversing at the same time the road they took on their way back to Jerusalem. But he did not join them now; he left them to muse in silence on all they had seen and heard, or to add to each other's wonder, gratitude, and gladness, by talking to one another by the way. Their hearts were now full of the desire to tell to the brethren they had left behind in the city all that had happened. On reaching Jerusalem, they get at once the opportunity they so much desire. A meeting of the apostles, and of as many others as they could conveniently call together, or could entirely trust, had quietly, somewhat stealthily convened;—the first, we may believe, since the Thursday evening meeting in the upper chamber. And where but in that same chamber can we imagine that this Sunday evening assembly gathered? The doors were closed against intruders, but these two well-known disciples from Emmaus are easily re-

cognised, and at once admitted. In what an agitated, conflicting state of thought and feeling do they find those assembled there! They had all heard the reports of the women and of Mary Magdalene; but they say little or nothing about them; perhaps give them little credit. But there is Peter, whom no one can well distrust, telling all the particulars of his interview, and carrying the conviction of so many, that they are joyfully exclaiming: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." But this is not the general, not at least the universal state of sentiment. The two disciples tell their tale, but it falls on many an incredulous ear. They are as little believed as the women and Mary Magdalene had been. They are trying all they can, by a minute recital of how Jesus had been known of them, to remove the incredulity, when suddenly, silently—coming as a spirit cometh, casting no shadow before him (the doors not opening to let him in), no sight nor sound giving token of his approach—Jesus himself is in the midst of them, and his "Peace be unto you," stills at once the conflicting conversation that had

been going on. The manner of this appearance may have been wholly miraculous and supernatural, or it may have been partly or wholly due to those new properties with which the resurrection body of the Saviour was endowed. Upon this difficult topic I have already said all it seems needful or perhaps possible to say. We must leave it clothed with the mystery which surrounds it. No mystery, however, hangs round the kindly, condescending manner in which Jesus proceeds to deal with the terror which his sudden appearance had created. He points to his hands, his feet, his side,—to the marks of those wounds that told of his recent death; marks which it pleased him that his resurrection body should still bear; marks which, it would seem from the apocalyptic vision, were not to be effaced even from that glorified body which he carried to the throne; marks which that form is to wear for ever, the only visible memorials that are to survive of the great decease accomplished at Jerusalem. Jesus asks them to handle him; an invitation which it is difficult to say whether they accepted or not. He shows them his hands


and his feet; and while yet they believe not for joy and wonder, he seeks still further to remove their incredulity, by showing them that he has still the power, though no longer the need, of partaking with them of their ordinary food. He eats of the fish and of the honeycomb. Doubt now gives place to conviction, fear to believing joy; a joy so fresh, so full, that it in turn begins to shake the new-born faith. How true to nature all this rapid succession of conflicting sentiments. Now at last, however, that little company of disciples has settled into a condition fitting it to listen, and Jesus returns to the subject that had engrossed the conversation on the way out to Emmaus; to this larger, more influential audience he unfolds the testimony that Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms—all the three divisions into which the Scriptures of the Old Testament were classified by the Jews—rendered to his Messiahship; dwelling particularly upon the topic most suited to the existing condition of their thoughts, how, in accordance with all that had been beforehand declared and signified, it behoved him, as the Christ, to suffer and then to rise again the

third day. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Wherever, therefore, in the writings of any one of these Christ-taught men they refer an important passage of the Old Testament to the Messiah, we may conclude that they had for doing so the direct and authoritative sanction of our Lord's own interpretation.

But his Messiahship, his death, his resurrection, were not matters in which they alone, their nation alone, were interested. Now that the needful work of suffering and death was over; now that the wonderful exhibition at once of the sacredness of the Divine law, the holiness of the Divine character, the deep unutterable love of God, had been given,—now, wide over all the world, were repentance and remission of sin to be proclaimed in his name; and they, the men to whom Jesus was then speaking, were to be the witnesses, the heralds, the preachers of this large and all-embracing gospel of peace on earth, and good-will, on God's part, towards all the children of men: The first and earliest hint this of the nature and the extent of their great commission; a hint which

they did not then understand, which they did not understand even under the enlightening and quickening influences of the day of Pentecost. So far their understanding was opened, that they saw clearly now that Christ ought to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory ; but their understanding was still shut as to that proclamation of God's forgiving mercy and love, which now in the name of Jesus was to be borne abroad over the whole earth.

But though it was to be left to time, and the after teachings of the Spirit, to lift them out of their narrow conceptions of the Divine love to man, as if its outgoings were to be limited to the pale of any one community upon earth, still an initial impression of the sacredness of their vocation as his disciples, of the manner in which the duties of that vocation could alone properly be discharged, and of the blessed and enduring results which were to follow in the train of that discharge, might be made upon their minds. And this was the result which Jesus, in the most striking and solemn manner, proceeded now to



bring about : the first step taken by him in the gradual and slow-moving process of qualifying them for that mission which they, and all other disciples of the Saviour after them, were to undertake and carry out.

Then said Jesus unto them again, "Peace be unto you!"—His first greeting, in which the same words had been used, they had been too surprised and affrighted to listen to, or take home. Now that their minds had become more composed, that they had settled down into a tranquil and joyful conviction that it was indeed their risen Lord who was in the midst of them, he repeats the greeting ; repeats it that they might not take it—though it was the common salutation phrase he used, as meant merely to be the usual greeting with which Jew met Jew in the ordinary intercourse of life ; that they might not take it as a mere expression of good-will, a wish for their welfare ; but that they might have their thoughts thrown back upon what, three evenings before, he had said to them : "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled,

neither let them be afraid." He had said so with the cross, with the sepulchre before him. And now the peace having been secured, and sealed by the blood of the cross and the rising from the sepulchre, with a new emphasis he says to them, 'Peace, my peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, the peace of pardon be unto you; take it as coming to you through me; enter into, and enjoy it as the fruit of my passion, as God's free gift to you in me. Let the quickening, the comforting assurance that God is at peace with you, that you are at peace with God, take possession of your hearts; that, having tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, you may be prepared for executing the high errand on which I am about to send you forth, that of publishing everywhere the gospel of this peace; preaching peace by me to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh;—"For as my Father sent me, even so now send I you." I send you forth in my name, and I will qualify you by my Spirit.' And having said so, he breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"—an outward and expressive symbol of the twofold truth, that dead,


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motionless, useless for all the common work of this earthly existence, as lay that dust which the hand of the Creator moulded into human form till he breathed into it the breath of its natural life,—so dead, motionless, useless for the work of our Christian calling do we all lie, till the breath of true spiritual life be breathed into us by the Holy Ghost. And as it was from the lips of the risen Saviour that the breath proceeded, which spread out upon the little company at Jerusalem, so is it from the risen, exalted Saviour that the Spirit comes, whose life-giving influences spread over the whole church of the first-born. But specially upon this occasion was the breathing of Jesus upon the disciples, and the gift which accompanied that breathing, meant to indicate that the mission on which Jesus was sending these disciples out—that of being witnesses for him—was one that could alone be discharged by those who, through him, had received more or less of that heavenly gift. It was this impartation of the Spirit, which was to form the one, indispensable qualification for the work ; without which it could not be done. We know,

historically, that it was but a very limited measure of this gift which was actually, upon this occasion, bestowed. The Holy Ghost was not yet in his fulness given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The more plentiful effusion of this gift was reserved for the day of Pentecost. That Spirit, who was to convince of sin, and to lead into all truth, began even then, indeed, his gracious work in the minds and hearts of these disciples, by convincing them of their unbelief and hardness of heart, and by opening their minds to understand the Scriptures. This was but an earnest of better things to come,—a few sprinkled drops of that fuller baptism wherewith they were afterwards to be baptized; but yet enough to teach that it was by Spirit-taught, Spirit-moved men—by men in whose breasts the heaven-kindled fire of the true spiritual life had begun to burn—that the commission Jesus had been giving could alone be executed. And let not those to whom Jesus is now speaking, speaking as the heads and representatives of the whole body of his true followers upon earth; let them not think, weak as they are, powerless as they

appear, that, in going forth to proclaim in his name, to every penitent transgressor, the free, full, instant, gracious pardon of all his sins, they are embarking in an ideal, unreal work,—a work of which they shall never know whether they are succeeding in it or not.

‘No,’ says the Saviour; ‘Partake of the peace I now impart, accept the commission I now bestow; go forth in my name; receive ye the Holy Ghost to guide you; announce the news of God to sinners; proclaim the remission of sins, and, verily I say, whosoever sins ye thus remit, they are remitted; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.’ Such I take to be the real spirit and object of these last words of Jesus, as spoken by him to his disciples at this time; words spoken to animate them in their after work by the assurance that they should not labour in vain; that what they should do on earth should be owned and ratified in heaven. It were to misinterpret the incidents of that evening meeting; it were to mistake the simple, immediate, and precise object which, in using them, our Lord had in view, to explain these words, as if they were intended




to clothe the eleven apostles, and after them, their successors or representatives—to clothe any class of officials in the church, exclusively, with a power of remitting and retaining sins. Where is the evidence that, as originally spoken, the words were addressed exclusively to the eleven? There were others present as well as they. “The two disciples,” Luke tells us, “found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them.” These other members of the infant church, with the two disciples, had the benediction pronounced on them, as well as on the eleven; the instructions were given to them, as well as to the eleven; the breath was breathed on them, as well as on the eleven. Had Jesus meant, when he spake of this remitting and retaining sins, to restrict to the eleven the power and privileges conferred, should he not by some word or token have made it manifest that such was his desire? At other times he was at pains to single out the twelve, when he had something meant for their eyes and their ears alone. Is it likely that at this time he would have omitted to draw a line between them and the others who were before him, had it been to

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them that these closing words were exclusively addressed?

But we have another and still stronger reason for not believing in any such restriction. Jesus had once before used words of nearly the same import with those that are now before us, and he had addressed them to the disciples at large: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered



together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The two concluding verses, as well as the preceding context, contain the conclusive evidence, that it was not to any select class or order of his followers that Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven " (Matt. xviii. 15-20).

We are not in the least disposed to doubt, that while Christ speaks of the remitting and the retaining of sins as pertaining to the Church at large, his words cover the acts of the Church in her organized capacity, the inflicting and removing of ecclesiastical censures through her office-bearers in the exercise of discipline. Here, however, we have two remarks to make : *1st*, That it is only so far as these acts are done by spiritual men, seeking and following the guidance of the Spirit, only so far as they are in accordance with Christ's own expressed will, that they are of any avail, or can plead any heavenly ratification ; and, *2dly*, That all the force they carry is nothing more or less than an authoritative and official declaration of what that will of the Lord is. Neither in any man, in



any pope or any priest, in any community, or in any ecclesiastical court, lies the absolute, the independent, the arbitrary power to absolve the sinner from his sins. But did not he, we are asked, with whom alone it is acknowledged that that power rests, appoint the eleven as his earthly delegates, and in the commission here given them, convey into their hands as such, that power? Just as little as in two other commissions given to two of the old prophets, he handed over to them that power over the kingdoms and nations of the earth which we rightly believe and affirm, resides alone in the hands of the Almighty. "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant" (Jer. i. 9, 10). "It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the

daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit" (Ezek. xxxii. 17, 18).

Here, in terms not less distinct than those in which Christ gives his disciples power over the sins of men, to remit or to retain, God gives to the two prophets power over the nations to cast down and to destroy. The true interpretation of the grant or commission is in both cases the same. In the exercise of any power, inherent or delegated, natural or acquired, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were altogether impotent of themselves to overturn a nation; in the exercise of any power, original or conferred, personal or official, the apostles were just as impotent to remove any sinner's guilt. The prophet's function was limited to the denouncing of a doom which it was for the hand of Jehovah alone to execute. The Church's function is as strictly limited to the announcing of a pardon which it is for the grace of the heavenly Forgiver alone to bestow. And if, in executing that simple but most honourable office of proclaiming unto all men that there is remission

of sins through the name of Jesus, she teaches that it is alone through her channels—through channels that priestly or ordained and consecrated hands can alone open—the pardon cometh, she trenches upon the rights and prerogatives of Him whom she represents, and turns that eye upon herself that should be turned alone on him.

But it is the gracious office of the Church, of every individual member thereof, of every distinct community thereof, in the sense here indicated, to absolve the sinner, to assure him of the Divine forgiveness, to help him to believe in that forgiveness. Wherever the gospel of the grace of God is preached, not generally, but pointedly, to an individual man, and he is entreated and encouraged to take hold of peace, to accept of pardon, to trust in the mercy of Jesus, to believe in the forgiving love of God,—then is that office of remitting sins in the name of Jesus undertaken and discharged. Two illustrative instances occur to us; the one public and official, the other private and personal. The first is that of the penitent offender at Corinth, who

was in danger of being swallowed up of over-much sorrow. Assuming that it lay with the Church to extend her forgiveness to that offender, desiring to do nothing upon his own individual authority, claiming no exclusive power of priestly absolution, Paul invites the Corinthian believers to deal tenderly, forgivingly with that man, and to receive him back into their communion, telling them that he was quite prepared to go along with them in such treatment of the penitent. "Wherefore I beseech you," he says, "that you would confirm your love toward him. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it, in the person of Christ." The great object was to make the repentant one feel how wide, how generous, how cordial and unreserved was the forgiveness which the Church extended to him, that he might all the more confidently repose in that other sympathy, that other forgiveness, which, far as the heavens are above the earth, are above all the sympathy, all the forgiveness of man.

Our other instance belongs to a late period

in the life of the beloved disciple. It lies beyond the period embraced in the New Testament history, but is well authenticated. When the tyrant who sent John to Patmos was dead, the apostle returned to Ephesus. Engaged in a visitation of the neighbouring churches, he saw in one of them a youth of so attractive an appearance that he specially committed him to the care and guardianship of the bishop, or chief minister of the church. The minister took the youth to his own home, cherished him, educated him, and at length baptized him. As he grew up, however, the care of his guardian relaxed, and he fell into the company of a band of idle and dissolute youths, who plunged together into a career of sin which led to the committal of offences that exposed them to the severest penalties of the law. Escaped from all restraint, and forming his associates into a band of robbers, the youth became their captain, surpassing all of them in deeds of violence and blood. Time ran on, and the aged apostle once more visited the same church. He asked about the youth, and wept when he heard his story. He took his way instantly to the

district which the robber-band infested, and was taken prisoner by the outguard of the banditti. He neither tried to fly nor offer any resistance to his captors. "Conduct me to your captain," he said to them; "I have come for the very purpose of seeing him." As soon as he recognised the venerable apostle advancing towards him, the captain would have fled; but the apostle pursued him, crying out, "Why dost thou fly, my son, from me thy father—thy defenceless aged father? Have compassion on me, my son. Fear not, thou still hast hope. I will intercede with Christ for thee. Believe that Christ hath sent me." The fugitive was arrested. They met once more. The apostle entreated him; prayed with him; solemnly assured him that there was pardon for him at the hands of Christ; and did not leave him till he led him back again, and restored him to the Church. In the manner of his restoring that erring youth, the beloved apostle showed how thoroughly he had imbibed the spirit of his divine Master, from whose lips half a century before he had listened to the words, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted."

V.

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.¹

WAS it his fault, or his misfortune simply, that Thomas was not present at that first meeting on the evening of the day of the resurrection ? Clearly enough, we cannot charge his absence with the same kind of neglect, with which now a refusal to join in the ordinary services of the sanctuary would be loaded ; for no such services had then been instituted, nor had any authority, human or divine, as yet prescribed them. That evening conference, hastily summoned under the prompting of the strange incidents of the day, was, in fact, the first of those assemblings on the Lord's day which have since become one of the established customs of Christianity. But as no such custom had as yet been established, Thomas cannot be accused of violating it. The circumstances, how-

¹ John xx. 24-29.

ever, under which that conference was held, were so peculiar, the pressure which prompted it so urgent, that we cannot imagine that any slight or fortuitous impediment would have kept any one of the eleven away. It may, therefore, have been Thomas's extreme incredulity as to the fact of the resurrection, the utter and blank despair into which the death of his Master had cast him, which indisposed him to join the rest. If it were so; if he kept aloof from his brethren, as believing that no good could come from their assembling; that it was all over with the hopes as to their Master which they had been cherishing; that they were mere idle tales which had been circulating about his having risen from the dead, —then, for his neglect of all that Jesus had predicted about his death and resurrection, and for his treatment of the testimony of Peter and the other early visitors of the sepulchre, he was amply punished, in losing that sight of the risen Jesus given to the others, and in his being left, for the seven days that followed, to the wretchedness of uncertainty and doubt—an uncertainty and doubt which would be all the bitterer, as contrasted

with the unclouded convictions and new-born joy of his brother disciples. Whilst they, lifted from the depths of their despair, were congratulating one another on the great triumph over death and the grave which their Master had achieved, were strengthening each other's faith, and heightening each other's joy, he, alone and disconsolate, was scraping together the scanty food on which his incredulity might nourish itself. In the course of that week, his brethren made many attempts to rid him of his distrust. But all in vain; the more they insisted, the more he refused. The stronger they affirmed the proof to be, the more inflexible became his resolution to resist it. The particulars of the manifold conversations and discussions which would, no doubt, go on between them, are not preserved. All that is told is, that he took and kept resolutely to that position behind which he entrenched himself, as he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." What were the grounds, real or fictitious, upon which this incredulity of Thomas rested ;


and how came that incredulity to take such a shape, and to embody itself in such a declaration?

Here, I think, by realizing distinctly the actual condition of things, both as regards the external circumstances which surrounded him, and the jaundiced eye with which he was disposed to look at them, we may convince ourselves that the incredulity of Thomas was not due to any reluctance, on his part, to believe in the resurrection, simply because of its being a strange, a supernatural occurrence. In that age, and in that country, this was a form of unbelief altogether rare, quite unlikely to have been exhibited by Thomas, or any follower of Jesus Christ. A belief in the supernatural was general, almost universal. To withhold his belief in any occurrence, purely and solely because it was miraculous, would have made a man about as conspicuous then, as a belief in all the alleged miracles of ancient and modern times would make a man conspicuous now. Between that time and this, the world has undergone an entire revolution in the state of its general belief, in the form of its practical infidelity. Besides,

even if there had been a large leaven of Sadduceeism working originally in the mind of Thomas, he had already witnessed, in his attendance upon Christ, incidents too extraordinary for him to refuse credence to the resurrection purely and solely on the ground of its singularity. Neither he, nor any others of the Lord's disciples—unwilling, as they all were at first, to believe that their Master was indeed alive again; difficult as they all were of conviction on this point—would have admitted their initial hesitation and incredulity to have proceeded from any such source. It was not the character of the event, it was the nature of their precedent faith in, and their precedent expectations about, their Master and his kingdom, which generated the difficulty which was felt by them as to believing in the resurrection. The true fountain of their earlier incredulity lay within, and not without; in their prejudices in regard to other matters, not in the nature and circumstances of the resurrection. There appears to me, therefore, to be a violence done to historic truth, to the real state of the case, when Thomas is taken, as he so often

is, as a type or early instance of that unbelief, belonging rather to modern than to ancient times, which staggers at all miracles, and is indisposed to admit anything supernatural.

Thomas's incredulity seems to have outstripped that of all the other disciples. They would not believe the Galilean women, when they brought to them the first reports of the resurrection; but they had believed when Peter told them that he had seen the Lord, even before they saw him with their own eyes. But Thomas will not believe, though to Peter's testimony there is added that of the two disciples who went out to Emmaus, and that of the whole body of the disciples to whom Jesus had afterwards appeared. To what is this excess, this peculiar obstinacy of unbelief on Thomas's part to be attributed? Was he the most prejudiced man among them; the man who clung most tenaciously to his earlier ideas and prepossessions, and would not let them go? Did those common elements of unbelief, which operated in the breasts of the others as well as in his, yet work in his with so much greater force as to signalize him in this way, and keep him standing out in his distrust for



so long a time beyond them ? There was one of those elements which we have some reason to think did work powerfully on Thomas. It would be quite a mistake to conceive of Thomas, because of his abiding incredulity, that he was a cold, selfish, cautious, unsanguine, naturally misbelieving man, hard to convince of anything which lay outside the circle of his own observations, or that did not touch or affect his own interests. Whatever in origin and nature his scepticism was, it was not the scepticism of religious indifference, nor did it spring from a predisposition to doubt. That the spirit of curiosity, of inquiry, was strong in him, we may perhaps infer from his breaking in upon our Lord's discussion in the upper chamber, saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way ?" Fuller evidence that he possessed and knew how to exercise the critical faculty ; that he liked to search and sift the evidence, and get at the real and solid grounds for believing, shall meet us presently ; but we must dismiss from our minds the idea that he answered in any way to the description which Wordsworth has given us of the man—

“ A smooth-rubb'd soul, to which could cling
No form of feeling, great or small ;
A reasoning, self-sufficient thing,
An intellectual all in all.”

The only other notice of him in the gospel narrative, besides the one already alluded to, and that in the passage now before us, forbids us to entertain any such ideas of Thomas's natural character and disposition. Escaping out of the hands of his enemies, Jesus had retired to Bethabara. To him, in his retreat, the sorrowing sisters sent their message : “ Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” The messengers were left without an answer. But, after two days of delay and inaction, Jesus abruptly says to his disciples, without explaining anything of the object of his visit, “ Let us go into Judea again.” It seemed a fatal resolution ; the disciples try to turn their Master from acting on it. “ Master,” they say to him, “ the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again ?” Their Master then tells of the reason for his going, and of his resolution at all hazards to carry out his intention. Then, says one of the twelve, if he will go, go to almost certain death, “ let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Had the name not been given, had we not been told which of them it was who so instantly, so warmly, so generously declared himself ready to die with his Master rather than desert him, we should have said that it must have been Peter who spake these words ; but it was Thomas, to whom much of Peter's ardour appears to have belonged. Upon such a man, so ardent in his attachment to his Master, we can readily believe that the blow of the crucifixion came with a peculiarly stunning force. In proportion to the eagerness of his hopes would be the blankness of his despair ; nor is it wonderful that, sunk into the depths of that despair, he would at first refuse to believe in the resurrection. Still, however, attribute what extra force we may to this one or that other of the ingredients of the unbelief shown by Thomas in common with his brethren, it seems difficult to understand the pertinacity of Thomas in standing out so long and so stubbornly against all attempts of his brethren to convince him. The great bulk of them had believed before they had seen the Lord. Why should that evidence, which was sufficient to carry their faith, not have carried his ? Yes, but they all at last

had seen ; they had seen, and he had not. In that very distinction do we not get sight of the secret bias by which the spirit of Thomas was swayed over to an unwillingness to give credence to the resurrection, an incredulity which, in self-justification, built up those buttresses of self-defence, behind which it finally entrenched itself, and from which it would not be dislodged ? The others had seen him, and he had not ; why should he be asked to believe on different evidence from theirs ? He had been as attached a follower of Jesus as any of them. Why should he be singled out, and left the only one who had not seen his Master ? He did not like, he did not choose, to be indebted to others for the grounds of his believing. He had just as good a right to ocular proof as they had ; and, in fact, till he got it he would not believe. The unwillingness that his faith should be ruled by theirs, generated a disposition to question the soundness of that faith. The Evangelist has given us only the conclusion to which Thomas came, the result of the many conferences with his brethren, and to which he

for so many days so resolutely adhered. The very terms in which he embodied this resolution enables us to fill up the blank. Jesus had come amongst them, the other disciples would tell Thomas, suddenly, silently,—the door being shut; they had not seen him till he was standing in the midst. It was very like the mode of a spirit's entrance; very unlike the manner in which one clothed with a solid substantial body would or could appear. They confessed to Thomas, that unless it were the two disciples who had just come in from Emmaus, all of them at first believed that it was a spirit, none of them that it was Christ: that he had himself noticed this, and had corrected their first and false impression. He had eaten in their presence, he had shown them the marks in his hands and side; he had said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Yes, but had any of them accepted the invitation, had any of them made such scrutiny of these marks, as to be sure that they were not superficial? They could not say they had. Strictly interrogated by one who was anxious to detect any weak point

in the evidence, they could not deny that it was within the limits of the possible that there might have been a mistake ; that there was a difference, they could not tell what, between the appearance of their Master as they had seen him before death, and as they saw him at the evening meeting. Seizing greedily upon anything which could possibly create a doubt, and turning it into an instrument of self-justification, Thomas at last declares, " Except I shall not only see in his hands the print of the nails, but shall put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." No small amount of ingenious casuistry springing out of wounded pride, an exaggerated feeling of self-consequence working in a nature not less strong in will, than ardent in affection.

" I will not believe." ' And is it even thus,' we feel disposed to make answer, ' that thy hurt vanity hopes to redeem itself from the fancied oversight ; is it thus that placed, as thou thinkest, below thy brethren, by not having got the same proof given them, thou thinkest to set thyself right by putting thyself above them, and declar-

ing that that proof may have been enough for them, but is not enough for thee? What right hast thou to ask a kind or amount of evidence above that which has satisfied all these thy brethren, and which would have satisfied any one unbiassed by deep precedent prejudice? What right hast thou to dictate thus to God, and to declare that thou wilt not believe till the form of proof thou prescribest be afforded? Thou wilt not believe---and if thou dost not, who but thyself will be the loser? Hadst thou been in the hands of man, in any other hands than those of so gracious a Master, thou mightest have waited long enough ere the proof was given, which in such spirit was demanded.'


Seven days go past, and the apostles are once more gathered together on the evening of the second first-day of the week. Thomas is with them now. What brought him there? Why, if he thought them wrong in rejoicing over an event, in the reality of which they had not sufficient reason to believe, did he join himself to their company? Because, I believe, with all his assumed and declared incredulity, he was not in his inmost

heart such an utter unbeliever as he would have others think he was. He had taken up a position which it behoved him to defend; but I am much mistaken, if a strong desire, an expectation, nay, something even of a faith, that it was even as his brethren had told him, was not working latently, yet strongly in his breast. We often grievously err in this respect, in our judgment or representations of others. If a man is known or said to be a covetous or an ambitious man, we are too apt to make him all covetousness or all ambition, and nothing beside. And so Thomas, being obstinately incredulous, we might imagine him to be utterly so. Not at all likely. There was room in him, as there is in most men, for very opposite and conflicting states of thought and emotion. We believe, therefore, that it was in a very mixed state of faith and feeling that Thomas sat down that evening with the rest. They have not sat long when again, in the very same way in which he had come before, Jesus enters and stands before them. The general salutation over, and before another word was spoken, he turns to Thomas and says, "Reach

hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing." How sudden, how unexpected the address ! Thomas knew that for seven days none of the disciples had seen the Lord ; none of them could have reported to him the words that he had used. Yet now are these very words repeated. It is the omniscient Jesus ; it is his own well-loved Master who stands before him. Instant within him is the rebound from incredulity to faith,—to a far higher faith than that simply in the reality of the resurrection ; of that he has no doubt. He does not what the Lord desires, and what he himself desired before. He does not put his finger into the print of the nails ; he does not thrust his hand into the side. Enough to see that well-known form ; enough to hear that well-loved voice. That sight, those words of Jesus, are sufficient to rebuke and to remove his unbelief. In a moment his doubts all flee ; faith takes their place : a faith purified, exalted, strengthened ; a faith in the true divinity as well as in the true humanity of his risen

Lord ; a faith higher, perhaps, at that moment than that to which any of his brethren around had attained. Adoring, believing, loving, the fervent, affectionate Thomas casts himself at his Master's feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God !"


A great advance here, we may well believe, on all Thomas's earlier conceptions of his Master's character. And may we not believe also that the bitter experience of the preceding week,—the troubled exercises of thought through which he then had passed, the searchings of those Scriptures which it was reported to him had been quoted and commented on by Christ himself,—had all been secretly preparing him to take this advancing step ; to believe that the Messiah of ancient prophecy was a very different Being in character and office from what he had before imagined ; much lowlier in some respects, much higher in others. And now, all at once, the revelation of the Redeemer's glory bursts upon him as Jesus in person stands before him ; and not only does all his former incredulity die away, but on its ruins there rises a faith which springs up all the higher



and stronger, because of the pressure by which it had previously been kept in check. Jesus knew how prepared Thomas was to call him Lord and God. He then might be asked to do what to Mary was so emphatically forbidden. "Touch me not," he said to her whose love to him had too much in it of the earthly, the human,—too little of the spiritual, the divine. "Reach hither thy hand," he said to Thomas. The invitation may be safely given to him who is ready to own the divinity of his Lord.

The title given him, conveying as it did so distinct and emphatic a testimony to that divinity, Jesus at once, as if it were his by birthright, accepts. But though he refuses not the tendered homage, he passes no such approving judgment on him who presents it, as he had formerly done upon Peter when he had made a like confession of his faith, and Christ had called him blessed. Instead of this, Christ administers now a mild but effective rebuke: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Christ could not mean by saying so, to

declare that he who believes without seeing is more blessed than he who upon sight believes; for that would exalt the weakest believer now above the strongest believer of Christ's own age. The idea that Jesus evidently intended to convey was this, that of two kinds of faith equally strong, that was to him a more acceptable, and to the possessor a more peace-giving one, which rested on reasonable testimony in absence of personal observation, than that which would not yield to such kind of evidence, and demanded that ocular demonstration should be given. It was, in fact, as addressed to Thomas, a distinct enough yet delicate intimation, that his faith had been all the more acceptable to his Master if it had not been delayed so long. But though this was the primary meaning of the saying, it is not without its bearings upon those who, like ourselves, have not seen, and yet are called to believe. The spirit of Thomas still lives among us. Have we not often detected ourselves, thinking at least, if not saying, that, had we lived in the days of Jesus Christ,—had we seen what those disciples saw,—we would not have doubted as they



did; that, give us but the evidence that they had, and our doubts would disappear? We practise thus a strange deception upon ourselves. We transfer ourselves in fancy to those scenes of the gospel history, carrying with us all the ideas of our age, forgetting that very different were the ideas of the men of that generation, who, though they had the advantage of the sight, had the disadvantage of the prejudices of their country and their epoch. So equalized in point of advantage and of responsibility do we believe the two periods to have been, that we may safely affirm, that the men of this generation who will not believe in the testimony of the original eye-witnesses, had they been of that generation, would not have believed though they had been the eye-witnesses themselves. He who now says, I will not believe till I see, would not, even seeing, have then believed.

Two closing reflections are offered. *First*, Take this case of Thomas, his throwing himself at once at his Master's feet, exclaiming, My Lord, my God, as a most instructive instance of the exercise and expression of a true, loving, affectionate, appro-

priating faith. It is outgoing, self-forgetting, Christ-engrossed. No raising by Thomas of any question as to whether one who had been incredulous so long, would be unwelcome when at last he believed. No occupation of mind or heart with any personal considerations whatever. Christ is there before him ; thought to be lost, more than recovered ; his eye beaming with love, his encouraging invitation given. No doubt about his willingness to receive, his desire to be trusted. Thomas yields at once to the power of such a gracious presence, unshackled by any of those false barriers we so often raise ; the full warm gushing tide of adoring, embracing, confiding love, goes forth and pours itself out in the expression, *My Lord, and my God !* Best and most blessed exercise of the spirit, when the eye in singleness of vision fixes upon Jesus, and, oblivious of itself, and all about itself, the abashed heart fills with adoration, gratitude, and love, and in the fulness of its emotion casts itself at the feet of Jesus, saying with Thomas, *My Lord, My God.*

Second, Let us take this instance of our Lord's

treatment of Thomas, as a guide and example to us how to treat those who have doubts and difficulties about the great facts and truths of religion. There was surely a singular toleration, a singular tenderness, a singular condescension in the manner of the Saviour's conduct here towards the doubting, unbelieving apostle. There was much about those doubts of Thomas affording ground of gravest censure; the bad *morale* of the heart had much to do with them. It was not only an unreasonable, it was a proud, a presumptuous position he took up, in dictating the conditions upon which alone he would believe. What abundant materials for controversy, for condemnation did his case supply! Yet not by these does Jesus work upon him, but by love,—by simply showing himself, by stooping even to comply with the conditions so unreasonably and presumptuously prescribed. And if, in kindred cases, when the spirit of religious incredulity is busy in any human breast, doing there its unhappy work in blasting the inward peace, waiving all controversy we could but present the Saviour as he is, and get the eye to rest upon

him, and the heart to take in a right impression of the depth and the tenderness and the condescension of his love, might not many a vexed spirit be led to throw itself down before such a Saviour, saying, Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.

VI.

THE LAKE-SIDE OF GALILEE.¹


SPEAKING to his disciples in the upper chamber before his death, Jesus said to them, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." On the morning of the resurrection, the angel said to the first visitants of the empty sepulchre, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." And as they went to execute this message, Jesus himself met them, and said, "Be not afraid : go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Pointed so frequently and emphatically to Galilee as to the chosen district within which their Master was to manifest himself, we might have anticipated that the apostles would have taken their immediate departure from Jerusalem. They

¹ John xxi. 1-14.

could not have done so, however, during the Passover week, without being guilty of a great offence against the religious feeling of their fellow-countrymen. They stayed, therefore, for these ten days still in the holy city. This delay in proceeding to Galilee, had their Master's sanction not indistinctly put upon it, by his twice appearing to them collectively, whilst they yet lingered in the metropolis. And yet, upon the first of these occasions, on the evening of the day of the resurrection, Jesus said to them, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." How are we to explain the contradictory orders upon which, given in the course of the same day, they were called upon to act? Galilee had obviously, for some special reasons, been selected by Christ as the region in which some special revelations of himself, after his resurrection, were to be given. Did this spring from a strong desire to revisit the scenes of his early life, the neighbourhoods in which most of his wonderful works were done? In solitude and concealment, shun-

ning everything like frequent or continued intercourse even with his own disciples, Jesus was to spend forty days on earth, before his ascension to the Father. Would it have been unnatural, that he should desire that the larger number of these days should be given to regions hallowed to him by associations such as human memory had never before been intrusted with? Or was it that, as Galilee had absorbed the largest share of his earthly labours, and had yielded to that labour the largest fruits, so it was there that the largest number of his disciples could be congregated, and that the quietest and securest opportunity of meeting with them could be had? It was there, we know, that he met the five hundred brethren; perhaps, it was there only that so many could have been collected, or, being collected, could have found a secluded and protected meeting-place. Whatever the motives were which prompted the Saviour to fix beforehand upon Galilee, and to announce it as his chosen trysting-place for meeting with the brethren at large, one can well enough see how desirable it was that the apostles should be laid under the double obligation,—*first*,

of going northward to Galilee, that they might share in the benefit of the most public of all Christ's appearances after his resurrection ; and, *secondly*, of returning to Jerusalem, as to the place in which the promise of the descent of the Spirit was to be fulfilled, and they were to be clothed with power from on high to execute their great mission upon the earth. Nearly two months were to elapse, ere that baptism of the Spirit was to be given. It might have been inconvenient or dangerous for them to have spent so long an interval idly, without occupation or means of support, in the metropolis. But neither were they to be suffered to return to their old Galilean haunts without an intimation being made to them, that it was in Jerusalem that their apostolic work was to make its auspicious commencement. It is not likely that the apostles saw this at the time as we now see it, as they saw it afterwards themselves. When they first left Jerusalem, they had perhaps no small difficulty in harmonizing the apparently conflicting instructions which had been issued. One thing was very apparent, that their Master intended to show himself to them in



Galilee; and to Galilee, therefore, so soon as the Passover celebration was over, they retired.

One evening some of them are together by the lake-side. Whether any of them had ever thought of resuming their old way of living, or had actually engaged in it, we do not know. All, however, is, this evening, so inviting; the lake looks so tempting; the night, the best time for the fisher's craft, so promising; their old boats and nets so ready to their hand,—that one of them, the very one from whom we should have expected such a proposition to come (in whom the spirit of his old occupation should be the readiest to revive), Peter says to them, "I go a fishing." The others say, "We also go with thee." It was not a concerted meeting this by the lake-side. The proposal is evidently on the part of Peter a thought of the moment, and it is agreed to in the same quick spirit as that in which it is made. The meeting, the proposal, the acquiescence, all seem fortuitous, accidental. Yet was it not all foreseen, all pre-arranged? An unseen eye follows these seven men as they embark, and watches them at their fishing toil; even the eye of

him who was waiting for them in the morning by the shore, by whose hand it was that the whole accidents of that night and morning were regulated. Even so let us believe, in regard to the most casual occurrences which happen still to the disciples of Jesus, that a providence as special and as gracious as that of which these seven men were the objects, is in them all, and over them all, causing them all to work together for their eternal good. Fitfully, curiously, without art or fixed design of ours, may the web of our destiny be woven, the threads thrown at random together, no orderly pattern apparently coming out of their conjunction, and yet, of all that web there is not a single thread whose place, whose colour, whose motion is not arranged with infinite skill, so as to mould our spiritual and eternal existence according to its predestined plan. As we recall and review the past, we may trace up to some trivial origin, some chance meeting, some accidental conjunction of circumstances, our present position, our present habits, our present character. As we do so, we may be disposed to ascribe all to a blind fate; but let this scene by the

Galilean lake-side, and the many other incidents of a like kind which the life of our Redeemer supplies, be the living proofs to us, that "chance also is the daughter of forethought," that the minutest details as well as the most momentous incidents of our earthly history, are all under the constant guidance of our Redeemer.


The disciples toiled all night ; it was the time most favourable for their work. These seven men knew the lake well, every bay of it where fish were most likely to be taken ; and they were skilful at this craft. Yet, though they did their best, and toiled all through the watch of the night, they caught nothing. Two years before, Peter had once been out all night with as little success, but Peter had never seen so many practised hands in a single boat toiling so long, and toiling so fruitlessly. Had the remembrance of that others night of like fruitless labour been suggested to any of the seven ? It would not seem that it had. The morning breaks upon the quiet lake, upon the wearied boatmen, and finds them within one hundred yards or so of the shore. There, upon the beach, a stranger stands ; stands as any

inhabitant of the neighbourhood might have stood, who, having caught sight of the fishing-boat, and knowing how its occupants must throughout the night have been engaged, wanted to be one of the first purchasers from them of the fruit of their toil. One might have thought that the very sight at such an early hour of a solitary figure upon the shore, would have awakened curiosity in the hearts of the disciples, and that, as they had been frequently and distinctly told, it was here in Galilee they were to see their Master again, it might have occurred to them that it was Jesus. The very kind and form of the question put to them, "Children, have ye any meat?"—a question which it appears much more clearly from the original than from our English version, was just the one which any stranger wishing to become a purchaser of their fish might have put—may have served rather to allay than to stimulate their curiosity. It is certain, at least, that they did not at first recognise him. Having got an answer to his question; having been told that they had nothing in the boat, Jesus said to the exhausted and hopeless fishers of the night, "Cast

the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They may have wondered for a moment at an order of that kind being given; they may have thought that the stranger had seen some indication of the presence of fish in that direction, which had escaped their eye. They may have had but little faith that the new cast of their net would be more successful than the many they had made before. But what the stranger directs can easily be done. They may try one last throw of their net before they land. They do so, and now at once they see that not without a reason had the order been given. Now, they find, that within the small enclosure which their net makes, such a multitude of fishes is embraced, that they have difficulty in drawing it through the water towards the land. And now it is that love proves itself as quick of eye as it had already shown itself to be swift of foot. When Peter and John ran out to the sepulchre, John outstripped Peter in the race. He outstrips him also in the recognition. They are together in the boat; a strange attraction binds the gentlest to the most forward of the twelve; and no sooner does it appear that the

last cast of the net, taken in obedience to the command of him who stands upon the shore, is not only successful, but successful to such an extraordinary degree, than the thought flashes into the mind of the beloved disciple that it must be Jesus. "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter. The Lord! Thomas has taught them the expression; they begin to speak of him as the Lord. "It is the Lord," says John, and satisfies himself with saying so. And now once again the characteristic difference between the two men reveals itself: John the first to recognise; but Peter the first to act upon the recognition. At once believing that it is as John has said, Peter, leaving it to the others to drag the net to shore, flung himself into the water. It was but a short distance to the shore—about 200 cubits, 100 yards. He was quickly beside the stranger; although it does not appear from the narrative that he gained anything by his greater forwardness of movement.


It is soon evident that it was not the want of any supply out of their boat which had led Jesus to put to them the question, "Children, have ye any meat?" On landing, the disciples find a fire



of coals, and fish already laid thereon, and bread at hand. Who gathered these coals? Who kindled that fire? Whence came the fishes and the bread? Mysteriously provided, the materials for the morning meal are there, quite independent of any supply which the last draught of the net may produce. But though all be ready for the weary and hungry fishermen, they must not leave their own proper work unfinished. As they gather in wonder around that fire to gaze on him who has furnished this fresh food for them, "Bring," said Jesus to them, "of the fish which ye have now caught." As if reminded by this order, of his having failed to take his proper part in the labour of dragging the net to shore, Peter is now the readiest to act upon this injunction. It is he who lands the net; and not till the fish taken in it have been secured and counted, does Jesus say to them, "Come and dine." He takes the bread and the fish, breaks and divides them among the seven. Was the miracle of the mountain-side here, on a smaller scale, again enacted? Was there only food enough for one man there at first, and did that food multiply as he blessed

(which we may assume he did) and parted it among them? This at least is certain, that he was known now not of Peter and John alone, but of all the seven, in the breaking of the bread. They all know it is the Lord; yet none of them durst ask him anything about himself,—a mysterious awe felt in his presence sealing their lips. It is in silence that this morning meal by the lake-side is partaken of. This, John says, was the third time that Jesus had showed himself; not literally the third time that he had showed himself to any one, but the third time that he had showed himself to the disciples collectively assembled in any considerable number, after he had risen from the dead.


It had been by a miraculous draught of fishes, like the one now before us, that, at the outset of his ministry, Christ had drawn away three at least of the seven now around him from their old occupations, and taught them to understand that in following him they were to become fishers of men. Why was that miracle repeated? Because the lesson which it conveyed was needed to be again given and re-enforced. Had they been told at first



to go to Galilee without the hint of a power to be given from on high, to be bestowed at Jerusalem, they might have returned to their old neighbourhoods, under the impression that they were to abide there permanently. And now that, bereft of the companionship of Christ, deprived of the means of support, if not driven by necessity yet tempted by opportunity, they resume their ancient calling, was it not needful and kind in Jesus to interfere, and, by the repetition of that miracle, whose symbolic meaning they could not fail at once to recognise, to teach them that their first apostolic calling still held good, that still the command was upon them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

The two miracles, the one wrought at the beginning, the other at the close of the Lord's ministry, were substantially the same. Regarded as symbols or mute prophecies, they carried the same significance. Yet there were differences between them, perhaps indicative that the one, the earlier miracle, was meant to shadow forth the first formation ; the later miracle the future and final ingathering of the Church. In the first instance,


Christ was himself in the vessel ; in the second, he stood upon the shore. In the first, the order was a more general one : "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second, a more specific one : "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." In the first, the nets began to break, and the ship to sink ; in the second, nothing of the kind occurred. In the first, it was a great multitude of fishes that were enclosed, of all sizes, we may believe, and of all qualities. In the second, it was a limited number of great fishes which was drawn to land. It may be a fancy—if so, however, it is one that many have had fond pleasure in indulging—to see in these diversities, the distinction between the present and visible effects of the casting forth of the gospel net upon the sands of time, and that landing and ingathering of the redeemed upon the shores of eternity. Treat this idea as we may, and great as are the authorities which have adopted it, I own to the disposition to regard it more as a happy illustration than a designed symbol,—the image is a scriptural one, that both individually with Christians, or collectively



with the Church, the present scene of things is the night of toil, through whose watches, whether fruitful or not of immediate and apparent good, we have to labour on, in hope of a coming dawn, when upon the blessed shores we shall hail the sight of the risen Lord, and share with him in partaking of the provisions of a glorious immortality.

The night is far spent ; that day is at hand. Let our toil then be one of hope, and our hope one full of immortality. And yet, dark and often troubled though it be, has not this night of our earthly sorrow shown us orbs of light we might never have seen by day? What should we have known of the Saviour had it not been for our sin ; what of his power to comfort, but for our present sorrow ? He is, indeed, the great light of this dark world of ours. In his incarnation we behold the earthly shining of this light. And what shall we say of his miracles, that long series of wonders done, of which this one by the lake-side was the closing one, but that they were the means taken by him for the fuller shining forth of that light which lighteth every

man who cometh into this world? Of the first miracle it is said in Scripture, and the saying may be applied to the last as to the first, to them all throughout,—“this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory.” His glory as the Son of the Father, stands forth exhibited in these miracles,—there is a simplicity, an ease, a dignity in the very manner of their performance, which distinguishes him from all other wonder workers. Moses must plead hard, and struggle long in prayer with God ere Miriam is cleansed of her leprosy. Elijah and Elisha must stretch themselves upon the dead ere life comes back again. Peter must say to the lame man at the Temple gate, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” These all act as servants in the name of Another, who permits them upon rare occasions, to speak in their Master’s name, and to use their Master’s power. But Christ, as a Son in his own house, speaks in his own name; puts forth his own power. His language to a leper is, “I will, be thou clean;” he touches the bier, the bearers at the touch stand still; he looks upon the lifeless



body, and saith, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." His word of power is heard in the recesses of the rocky sepulchre : "Lazarus, come forth."

But chiefly the glory, not of power, but of goodness, of love, was manifested forth in these miracles of Jesus. The miracles of Moses were miracles of awe and terror ; wrought in rivalry of the colossal powers of ancient heathenism, they were on a scale of amplitude befitting their design, their chief spheres external nature, the earth, the rock, the river, the ocean, and the sky. Around the miracles of Jesus, a milder, but richer glory gathers ; their chief sphere, the region of human life, man's sins, man's sorrows, man's maladies, man's wants. It is divine power acting as the servant of divine love, which meets to gladden our eye. Nor is it in these miracles alone of Jesus, that this love and power in blended action are to be beheld. It is not so much as outward evidences of the divinity of his mission, but still more as exhibitions and illustrations of his divine character, that we prize and love to study these miracles of our Lord ; and their chief lesson is lost on us, if we fancy that it was then only when he was working

them, that the divine power and the divine goodness that lay in him were acting. That power and love were everywhere, and at all times going forth from him ; and the only true believer in love and power divine, is he who sees them in every change of nature, in every work of providence, in every ministration of grace, and who never fancies that it is in the working of miracles alone that the great hand and power of the Omnipotent are to be beheld. The miracles are to be regarded by us, not as stray specimens, rare and exclusive manifestations of that unseen Lord whom we adore, but as methods merely which he has taken, suited to our ignorance and to our indifference, to startle us into attention, to make visible to us that which ever lurks behind unseen, to quicken us to that faith which, when once rightly formed and exercised, shall teach us to see God in all things, and all things in God.

VII.

PETER AND JOHN.¹

THE repetition of the miraculous draught of fishes was nothing else than a symbolical renewal of the commission given originally to the apostles, intended to teach them that their first calling to be fishers of men still held good. There was one, however, of the seven for whose instruction that miracle was intended, whose position towards that apostolic commission was peculiar. He had taken a very prominent place among the twelve, had often acted as their representative and spokesman. But on the night of the betrayal he had played a singularly shameful and inconsistent part. Vehement in his repeated assertion that though all men should forsake his Master he never would, though thrice warned, he had thrice over, with superfluous oaths, denied that

¹ John xxi. 15-23.

he ever knew or had anything to do with Jesus. How will it stand with Peter if that apostolic work has to be taken up again? Has he sufficiently repented of his sin? Will he not, in the depth of that humility and self-distrust which his great fall has taught him, shrink from placing himself on the same level with the rest? Does Jesus mean that he should re-occupy the place from which, by his transgression, he might be regarded as having fallen? Singling him out when the morning meal by the lake-side was over, Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these, thy brethren, my other disciples, do?" What a skilful yet delicate method, without subjecting him to the painful humiliation of having his former denials of his Master exposed and dwelt upon, of testing and exhibiting the trueness and deepness of Peter's repentance. Will he repeat the offence; will he again compare himself with the others; will he again set himself above them; will he renew that boasting which was the sad precursor of his fall? How touchingly does his answer show that he perfectly understood the involved reference to the past;

that he had thoroughly learned its humbling lessons. No longer any comparing himself with, or setting himself above others. He will not say that he loves Jesus more than they ; he will not say how much he loves. He will offer no testimony of his own as to the love he feels. He will trust his deceitful heart no more. But, throwing himself on another's knowledge of that heart which had proved better than his own, he says : "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Our Lord's reply is a most emphatic affirmative response to this appeal. It is as if he had said at large : 'Yes, Simon Barjona, I do know that thou lovest me ; I see too that thou wilt make no boast of thy love ; neither in that nor in anything else wilt thou set thyself above thy fellows ; by the pressure of this probe into thy throbbing heart it has been seen how true and deep thy penitence has been, how thoroughly it has done its work in humbling thee. And now, that thou, and these thy brethren, may know and see how readily I own and acknowledge thee as being to me all thou ever wert, I renew to thee this great

commission; I reinstate thee in the apostolic office,—“Feed my lambs!”


Peter was not asked a second time whether he loved more than others; but as three times he had been warned, and three times he had denied, so three times will Jesus reinstate, restore. Can we wonder that Peter was grieved when, for the third time, the general question, Lovest thou me, was put to him? It was not the grief of doubt, as if he suspected that Jesus only half believed his word, but the grief of contrition, growing into a deeper sadness at the so distinct allusion to his three denials, in the triple repetition of the question. With a sadder and fuller heart, in stronger words than ever, he makes the last avowal of his love: “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

In the Greek tongue, the language in which this conversation between Christ and Peter is recorded, two different words are used for the one translated *love*, two different words for the one translated *feed*, and two different words for the one translated *sheep*. We may believe that in that dialect

of the Hebrew which was spoken by Christ, from which the Greek was itself a translation (for we are to remember that only in one or two instances have the actual words spoken by Jesus been preserved), there was some way of making the same distinction of meaning which is expressed in the different words for *love*, and *feed*, and *sheep*. It would be quite out of place to go further here into such a topic. The result is that Jesus first asks Peter whether he cherishes to him a love, spiritual, holy, heavenly; that Peter declines using the term which his Master had employed, and contents himself with speaking of a kind of affection, simpler, more personal, more human; that Jesus first commits the feeding of the lambs to Peter, then the general guidance or oversight of the whole flock that he had purchased with his blood; and that finally he returns to the simple idea of feeding, as applied to this whole flock.

Of more importance is it to notice (as supplying the room for this variety) the change of image from that of the fisher to that of the shepherd, as representing the apostolical or

ministerial office. Had it been solely as fishers of men that Peter and his brethren had been described, as the business of the fisherman is to get the fish into the net, and draw them safe to land, so it might be thought that the one office of the spiritual fisherman was to bring sinners to Christ, to get them safe into his arms. A true, yet contracted idea of the scope and bearing of the ministerial office might come thus to be entertained. It is very different when that office is presented to us under the idea of a pastorate. A much truer, because ampler conception of its manifold privileges, responsibilities, means, duties, objects, is thus acquired. Oversight, guidance, care, protection, provision, these of the most varied kind, as adapted to all the conditions, exposures, wants, of all the separate members of the flock, are all embraced within the function of the shepherd. But let us not here fashion to ourselves a perfect ideal of what the spiritual shepherd is, or ought to be, and then imagine that each under-shepherd of the great Christian flock is bound, in some degree, to realize, in his own person and his own work,



each separate attribute, each separate mode or class of activities, which go to constitute the model that we have constructed. The work of the Christian ministry was, in the apostolic age, almost wholly evangelistic, aggressive. There was not the call or the opportunity then for the exercise of many of those gifts, which came afterwards to be consecrated to the cause of Christ, to the advancement of his kingdom. Yet, even then, there was no one fixed course, which all apostles, and all presbyters, and all elders, and all deacons were alike called upon to follow. Had we the lives and labours of all the twelve apostles before us, I am persuaded that we should be as much struck with the diversity, as with the multiplicity of their operations. Very different, as, in a single instance, we shall presently see, were the characters, the dispositions, the capabilities of the twelve men whom the Lord himself selected as the first propagators of his religion upon earth; and room was found for all these differences acting themselves out in the different spheres of labour selected by, or assigned to them. So is it, so should it be


still, in the labour of individual Christians, in the work of the Christian ministry. God has scattered among us a great variety of gifts, has set us where a great variety of services may be rendered. As there are many members in one body, yet all have not the same office; so neither have all the true members of Christ's mystical body the same office to discharge. "Let not the hand then say to the eye, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee." Let not those who are engaged in one kind of Christian work criticise or condemn those who are engaged in another. Let each of us do the best we can with the kind and amount of the talent intrusted to us; let each of us try to do that which both naturally and immediately comes to our hand, not judging one another; "for who art thou who judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," but not to thee.

There is, however, one common, universal, indispensable qualification for all genuine Christian work,—a supreme, a constraining love to Christ. Once, twice, thrice, is the question,

“Lovest thou me?” put to Peter; and once, twice, thrice, no sooner is an affirmative reply given than the injunction follows: ‘If thou lovest me, as thou lovest me, then feed my lambs, feed my sheep.’ And the first, the second, the third pre-requisite for all true feeding of the lambs, the sheep of the Saviour’s flock, is attachment to Himself—a love to Jesus Christ running over upon all who, however weakly, do yet believe in him. The want of that love, nothing can supply: not mere natural benevolence,—that may lead its possessor to do much to promote the happiness of others, may win for him their gratitude and good-will, but will not teach him to labour directly and supremely for their spiritual, their eternal good; not the mere sense of duty,—that may secure diligence and faithfulness, but will leave the work done, under its exclusive promptings, sapless and dry,—the element not there of a warm and tender sympathy, that best instrument of power. It is love-inspired, love-animated labour, which Jesus asks for at our hands. That we may be able, in any degree, to realize it, let it be our first desire and

effort to quicken within our souls a love to him who first, and so wonderfully, loved us; the flickering and languid flame in us, let us carry it anew, day by day, to the undying fire that burns in the bosom of our Redeemer, to have fresh fuel heaped upon it, to be rekindled, refreshed, sustained, expanded. To know and believe in the love that Christ has to us, to feel ourselves individually the objects of that love, to open our hearts to all the hallowed influences which a realizing sense of that love is fitted to exert,—this is the way to have our spirits stirred to that responsive affection to him, which gives to all Christian service purity and power.


“Simon, Simon,” our Lord had said to Peter before his fall, “Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted”—converted, Jesus means here not in the ordinary sense of the term, but recovered, restored—“then strengthen thy brethren.” That strengthening of the brethren formed part of the shepherd’s office, now anew committed to Peter; and what a



lesson had he got in the treatment which he had himself received at the hands of the Chief Shepherd, as to how that office should be discharged ! The prayers, the warnings, the look of love, the angel's message, the private interview, this conversation by the lake-side,—these all told Peter of the thoughtfulness, the care, the kindness, the pitying sympathy, the forgiving love, of which he had been the object. Thus had he been treated by Jesus ; and let him go and deal with others as Christ had dealt with him.

So far in what Christ had spoken, whilst there was much that was personal and peculiar to Peter, there was much also that had a wider bearing. But now the Lord has a word, which is for Peter's ear alone. "Whither I go" (he had said to him in the upper chamber) "thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards ;" and Peter had said in reply, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now ? I am ready to go with thee to prison, and to death ; I will lay down my life for thy sake." These words of the apostle, though sadly falsified the night when


they were spoken, still were to hold good. Peter did follow his Master, even unto death. He did lay down his life for Jesus' sake ; crucified, as his Lord had been. Knowing this, and knowing that he needed all the encouragement which could be given him, to fortify him to meet the martyr's doom, not only will Jesus in that private interview in the resurrection-day wipe all his tears away, and now in presence of his brethren reinstate him in his apostolic office, but he will do for him what he does for no other of the twelve,—he will reveal the future so far as to let him know by what kind of death it should be that he should glorify God—to let him know that the opportunity would be at last afforded him of making good the words which he too hastily and boastfully had spoken. “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest ; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” The explanatory clause which is introduced here, creates the impression that there had been a break or interruption of the discourse.



From verse twentieth, it would appear too, that Jesus had made some movement of withdrawal. These two circumstances combine in inducing the idea, that when our Lord said to Peter, "follow me," he meant simply that he should go along with him as he now retired. If, however, the words of the nineteenth verse were spoken in immediate connexion with, and in continuation of what is recorded in the eighteenth, then, in saying "follow me," our Lord might have had in his eye the very words of Peter about following him to prison and to death, and have meant, in using them, to say, 'When thou shalt be old, and another shall seize upon thee and bind thee as they seized and bound thy Master in preparation for his crucifixion, then Peter, follow me, through the Cross to glory.'

It is very difficult, owing to the briefness of the gospel narrative, to picture to our eye the scene which followed. Did Jesus, as he said "follow me," arise to depart, and was Peter in the act of following when he turned and saw John following also? Did John mistake so far the meaning of Christ's word and act, as to


consider himself equally with Peter called upon to follow ; or was it of his own motion, and without any real or imagined invitation that he was acting ? However it was, Peter, his mind full of the many thoughts that this pre-intimation of his death had excited, turns and sees John by his side. His own fate had been foretold ; what, he wondered, would be John's. The beloved disciple had once, at his suggestion, put a question to their Master about the others ; now he will put a question about John—a question of natural and of brotherly curiosity, yet somewhat out of place. He has resumed too rapidly his old position, and his old hasty and forward ways. Jesus will not become a fortune-teller, to gratify even a friendly inquisitiveness. He puts a check upon the unbefitting inquiry, and yet, singularly enough, even in rebuking, he answers it. “ If I will that he tarry, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? follow thou me.” Each man's path, as each man's duty, is separate and distinct. What the lot of another man may be, has nothing to do with the regulation of thine individual course. What is it to thee, Peter, whether John's destiny



shall be the same or different from thine ? The thing for thee to do is not to turn aside to busy thyself with his hereafter, but to occupy thyself with the duty that lies immediately before thee to discharge. What is that to thee ? follow thou me.' But if I will that he tarry till I come : Only imagine that Jesus was other than divine, and how arrogant the assumption here of his will regulating human destinies, fixing the time and the manner of his disciples' death ; Deity incarnate alone was entitled to use such language : " If I will that he tarry till I come." When John wrote his Gospel, that saying of Jesus was not understood. Some regarded it as implying that John should never die. The beloved disciple himself saw only so far into its meaning, that it contained no direct assertion of that kind, but further he did not then see. Perhaps afterwards, when he saw all the apostles die out before, and witnessed, as he only did, the destruction of Jerusalem, of which Christ had often spoken as identified with his coming,—perhaps at that time, forty years after the meeting by the lake-side, he remembered the words that his Master had spoken, and won-

dered as he perceived how remarkably they were fulfilled.


Next to the absence of all notice of our Lord's mother, few things are more remarkable, in the narrative of the period after the resurrection, than the silence respecting John. One of the earliest visitants at the sepulchre, present at both the evening interviews at Jerusalem, the disciple whom Jesus loved is neither spoken of nor spoken to. This is the only case in which he meets our eye, and he appears here rather in conjunction with Peter than with Jesus. In the account of our Lord's ministry, though John was frequently associated with Peter, it was as one of the two sons of Zebedee, the tie to his brother James being then obviously a stronger one than that to Peter. But from the hour when the two entered together the hall of the High Priest, a singular attraction appears to have drawn these two men together. The brotherly tie yields to one which has become still stronger, and instead of its being Peter and James and John, it is now Peter and John who are seen constantly in company with one another. This is all the more singular, when



one considers how unlike the two were in natural character, in original disposition.

John was born a lover of repose, of retirement. Left to himself, he would never have been an adventurous or ambitious man. Even in his very motion there had been rest. Had he never seen the Saviour, he would have remained quite contented in the occupation to which he had been brought up. To sit upon the sunny banks of that lovely inland lake mending his nets, his eye straying occasionally across its placid waters, or lifted to the blue expanse above ;—to take his accustomed seat in his fishing-boat, to launch out by night under these burning heavens, and sweep over the well-known haunts, would have been enough for him ; he neither would have desired nor sought for change. It may seem to militate against this idea of John's character that he and his brother were called Boanerges, the Sons of Thunder. We are not told, however, the reason why this title was bestowed on them,—it may have been derived from something peculiar in the father rather than in the sons. Nor can we allow the bestowal of an unexplained and ambiguous

epithet to outweigh the whole drift and bearing of the gospel narrative, which speaks so much of the meekness and modesty and gentleness and retiringness of John. But let us not confound John's yielding gentleness with that spirit of easy compliance which shuns all contest, because it does not feel that there is anything worth contending for. Beneath John's calm and soft exterior there lay a hidden strength. In the mean, vulgar strife of petty, earthly passions, John might have yielded when Peter would have stood firm. But in more exciting scenes, under more formidable tests, John would have stood firm when Peter might have yielded. This was proved on the night of the arrest, and the day of the crucifixion. And there was latent heat as well as latent strength in John. As lightning lurks amid the warm, soft drops of the summer shower, so the force of a love-kindled zeal lurked in his gentle spirit. The Samaritans might a thousand times have refused to receive himself into their dwellings, and it had stirred no resentment in his breast; but when they contemptuously refused to receive the Master to whom he was so ardently



attached, it was more than he could endure. He joined his brother James in saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?"—a solitary outbreak of a sentiment but seldom felt, or if felt, habitually restrained; yet that single flash reveals an inner region where all kinds of vivid emotions lived and moved and had their being.

Nor let us confound John's simplicity with shallowness. If it be the pure in heart who see God, John's was the eye to see farther into the highest of all regions than that of any of his fellows. If it be he that loveth who knoweth God—for God is love, John's knowledge of God must have stood unrivalled. We reckon his as belonging to the highest order of intellect; not analytical nor constructive; the logical faculty, the reasoning powers, not largely developed; but his the quick bright eye of intuition, which, at a glance, sees farther into the heart of truth than by the stepping-stones of mere argumentation you can ever be conveyed. There were besides under that calm surface which the spirit of the beloved disciple displayed to the common eye of obser-

vation, profound and glorious depths. The writer of the Gospel and the Epistle is, let us remember, the writer also of the Apocalypse; and if the Holy Spirit chose the human vehicle best fitted for receiving and transmitting the divine communications, then to John we must assign not the pure deep love alone of a gentle heart, but the vision and the faculty divine, the high imaginative power.

Peter, again, was born with the strongest constitutional tendency to a restless and excited activity. He could not have endured a life of monotonous repose. He was a child of impulse; he would have been a lover of adventure. He was not selfish enough to be a covetous, nor had he steadiness enough to be a successfully ambitious man; but we can conceive of him as intensely excited for the time by any distinction, or any honour placed within his reach. Had he never seen the Lord, one cannot think of him as remaining all his life a fisherman of Galilee; or, if the natural restraints of his position kept him there, even in that fisherman's life he would have found the means of gratifying his constitutional

biases. Eager, ardent, sanguine, it needed but a spark to fall upon the inflammable material, and his whole soul kindled into a blaze, ready to burst along whatever path lay open at the time for its passage. The great natural defect in Peter was the want of steadiness, of a ruling, regulating principle to keep him moving along one line. Left to work at random, the excitability of such a susceptible spirit involved its possessor often in inconsistency, exposed him often to peril. We have, however, had this apostle so often before us, that we need not say more of him. Enough has been said to bring out to your eye the strong contrast in natural character and disposition between him and John. Yet these were the two of all the twelve, who finally drew closest together. The day of Pentecost wrought a great change upon them both, and by doing so linked them in still closer bonds. The grace was given them which enabled each to struggle successfully with his own original defects, and to find in the other that which he most wanted. It is truly singular, in reading the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, to notice how close

the coalition between Peter and John became. Peter and John go up together to the temple. It is upon Peter and John that the lame man at the gate fixes his eye. After he was healed, it is said that he held Peter and John, as if they were inseparable. It was when they saw the boldness of Peter and John that the members of the Sanhedrim marvelled. And when they commanded them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, it is said that Peter and John answered and said, as if in very voice as well as in action they were one—(Acts iii. 1, 3, 11 ; iv. 13, 19).

Blessed fruit this of that all-conquering grace of God, which lifts Peter above the fear of reproach, and John above the love of ease ; which brings the most timid and retiring of the twelve to the side of the most stirring, the most impetuous ; supplying a stimulus to the one—a regulator to the other ; bringing them into a union so near, and to both so beneficial—John's gentleness leaning upon Peter's strength ; Peter's fervid zeal chastened by John's pure, calm love. In the glorious company of the apostles, they shone

together as a double star, in whose complemental light, love and zeal, labour and rest, action and contemplation, the working servant and the waiting virgin, are brought into beauteous harmony.

VIII.

THE GREAT COMMISSION.¹

THE very fact that among those who saw Christ upon the mountain side of Galilee, there were some who doubted, convinces us that more than the eleven must have been present at the interview. For after his repeated appearances to them in Jerusalem, after his meeting with them, and eating with them, and showing them his hands and his side, and asking them to handle him,—that any of the eleven should at this after stage have doubted is scarcely credible. And our impression of the incredibility of this is deepened by reflecting that it was to a place of his own appointment they now went, and that for the very purpose of seeing and conversing with him once more. There are other and still weightier reasons, which leave no ground for


¹ Matt. xxviii. 16-20.

doubt, that the appearance of the risen Saviour recorded by St. Matthew—the only one which this evangelist does record, and to which we may therefore conclude that a peculiar importance attached—was the same with that to which St. Paul refers, when he says, “After that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.”

It was the will of Christ to show himself alone after his resurrection, once, and once only, to the whole collective body of his disciples; to as many, at least, as could conveniently be congregated at one time, and in one place. It was in Galilee that this purpose could best be accomplished. There, and there only, could so many as five hundred of his disciples be found, and brought safely together. After the ascension, when all assembled at Jerusalem that the city and its neighbourhood could supply, the number of them gathered there was only one hundred and twenty. Hence, perhaps, one reason why, on the night before his death, and on the morning of his resurrection, the apostles were so repeatedly and em-

phatically told by Christ himself, and through the commissioned angel, that he went before them into Galilee, and it was to be there that they were to see him. Their attention was thus fixed beforehand upon an interview at which the most public and impressive manifestation of their risen Lord was to be made.

The necessity of the case required that both time and place should be named beforehand, fixed by our Lord himself, by him communicated to the apostles, by them announced to others; the tidings conveyed abroad over Galilee, wherever disciples of Jesus were to be found. One can imagine what intense curiosity, what longing desire to be present at such an interview, would be kindled wherever the intelligence was carried. In due time the day appointed dawns. On towards the indicated mountain side, group after group is eagerly pressing;—the solitary one from some far-off hamlet, the one of his family that has been taken while the others were left, mingling with the larger companies that Capernaum and Bethsaida send forth. All are gathered now. From knot to knot of old Galilean friends, the



apostles pass, assuring them that this is indeed the day and the place the Lord himself had named ; and giving a still quicker edge to the already keen enough curiosity, by telling of the strange things they had so lately seen and heard at Jerusalem.

What new thoughts about the Crucified would be stirring then in many a breast ! A prophet, all of them had taken him to be ; but if all be true that they now are hearing, he must be more than a prophet ; for which one of all their prophets ever burst the barriers of the grave ? The Messiah, many of them had taken him to be ; but now, if they are to retain that faith, their former notions of who and what the Messiah was to be, must be greatly changed. A Messiah reaching his throne through suffering and death, is an idea quite new to them. They ask about his late appearances, and are lost in wonder as they hear how few they have been, how short ; at what a distance, even from the eleven, the risen Jesus had kept ; what a studied reserve there had been in his intercourse with them, so different from his old familiarity. He

is, he must be, a Being other—far higher—than they had fancied him to be. Is it really true what they had heard himself say, but had not fully understood, that he was the Son of, the equal of the Father—God incarnate? Thomas tells them that he fully believes so. The other apostles tell them that he has opened their minds through a new interpretation of the prophecies to quite different notions about himself and his kingdom from anything they had hitherto entertained. In what a very singular condition of thought and feeling, as they try to realize it, must that company of five hundred brethren have been, which collected on the mountain side, and stood awaiting Christ's coming?

At last the Lord appears: we know not how; whether bursting at once on their astonished vision, without shadow of approaching form or sound of advancing footstep, seen standing in the midst; or whether seen at first far off, alone in the distance, silently watched, as treading the mountain side he drew nearer and nearer to them, till at last he was by their side. However he came, when they saw him, we are


told they worshipped :—with clasped hands, or on bended knee ; some, like Thomas, with profound and intelligent adoration ; others with a worship, heightened by wonder, somewhat vague, but pure as the mountain air they breathed. But some doubted—those who saw him now for the first time after his resurrection. Here, as in almost every first interview of the kind, there was a doubt, one speedily dispelled, whose natural source we have already attempted to indicate.

“ And Jesus came and spake to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.” To whatever height of conception and belief the men of that company may have been rising, upon whose ears these words fell, as Christ’s greeting to them in the first, the only interview they were to have with him after his resurrection, we may be assured that they went much beyond what they ever expected to hear coming from those lips. Already they had worshipped, gazing in wonder on him, as one who had come to them from the dead. But what fresh subject for wonder now ; what higher reason for worship now ! Power they knew him to possess ; power over

earth, and air, and water ; power over the spirits of all flesh ; power even over the demons of darkness. Power enough they had attributed to him to set up an earthly kingdom in front of all opposition, to crush all its enemies under his feet. Such power they were prepared to hear him claim, and see him exercise. But they were not prepared to hear him say, " All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Far above all their former thoughts of him does Jesus thus ascend, and, by ascending, try to lead them up. It has been already suggested, that one part of Christ's design in dwelling for these forty days on earth, and in the mode of conduct to his disciples which he pursued, was gradually to lift their minds from lower and unworthier thoughts of him to a true conception of his divine dignity and power ; and it confirms our belief in this to find that in the greatest, the most public, the most solemn manifestation of himself which Christ at that time made, his first declaration to the assembled five hundred was, " All power is given to me in heaven and in earth !"

When first uttered, how many eyes were fixed in wonder upon the man who spake these words ! Eighteen hundred years have gone past since then ; millions upon millions of the human family have had these words repeated to them, as spoken by the Son of Mary ; have regarded them as honestly and truly spoken ; as expressing but a simple fact. How could this have been ? How could a man of woman born, who had lived and died as we do, have been regarded as other than the vainest, most arrogant of pretenders, who said that all power in heaven and in earth was his, had there not been something in the whole earthly history of this man which corresponded with and bore out such an extraordinary assumption ? And even such were the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. They have now been for centuries before the world, as the life and death of one who claimed to be the eternal Son of God, the equal of the Father ; of one who said that as the Father knew him, so knew he the Father ; of one who said that whatsoever things the Father did, the same did the Son likewise ; that the Father had delivered all

things into his hand ; that all power was his in heaven and in earth. And no one has ever been able to show anything in the character, the sayings, the doings of Jesus Christ, inconsistent with such extraordinary pretensions ; all is in harmony with the claim, all goes to sanction and sustain it. It seems to us that the simple fact that there was a Man who lived for three-and-thirty years in familiar intercourse with his fellow-men, who yet, before he left this world, was recognised and worshipped by five hundred of his fellow-men as one who was guilty of no presumption in saying, " All power is given me in heaven and in earth ;" and who, since that time, has been believed in by such multitudes as God incarnate, goes far, of itself, to sustain the belief that he was indeed the Son of the Highest, and that it was no robbery with him to count himself equal with God ; for, only imagine that he was no more than he seemed to be, a Jew, the son of a Galilean carpenter, educated in a village in the rudest part of Judea,—that such a man, being a man and no more, could have lived so long upon the earth without saying or doing



anything which could belie the idea that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; appears to us to present far greater difficulties to faith than does the doctrine of the Incarnation.

It is not so much, however, as one possessed of it by original and native right, that Jesus lays claim here to supreme and unlimited power. He speaks of the "all power in heaven and in earth" as "given,"—given by another; by Him whose law he had so magnified, whose character he had so glorified in his life and by his death. It was as the fruit and reward of his obedience unto death that he was invested by the Father with unlimited authority and power. One of the conditions of the everlasting Covenant was that, crucified in weakness, Christ should be raised in power; that, on account of his having suffered unto death, he should be crowned with glory and honour. And his first word to this company on the mountain side is the first announcement from his own lips, that, his great decease having been accomplished, this condition of the covenant had been fulfilled; that he had entered upon possession of the mediatorial sovereignty. Consti-

tuted heir of all things, the great inheritance had to be acquired, the kingdom won. The heir still lingers for a season upon earth, but he is on his way to the throne on which he is to sit down, covered with glory and honour, angels and principalities and powers being made subject to him. Jesus indeed speaks here as if he were already upon that throne. As in the upper chamber, when the agony of the garden and the sufferings of the cross still lay before him, he spake as if the passion were over, as if heaven had been already entered, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;" so here, on the mountain side, he speaks as if the cloud had already carried him away,—as if his feet were already standing within the throne of universal sovereignty,—as if, having raised him by his mighty power from the dead, the Father had already set him on his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world,

but also in that which is to come; had put all things under his feet, and given him to be Head over all to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

It is from the lofty elevation thus attained, it is as clothed with the supreme, limitless authority and power thus acquired, that Jesus issues the great commission to the Church, Go ye therefore and teach or make disciples of all nations; or as you have it in another evangelist, Go, preach the gospel to every creature. A mission so comprehensive was as novel as it was sublime. Familiarity with the idea blunts the edge of our wonder, but let us recollect that at the time when, in a remote Jewish province, gathering a few hundred followers around him, Jesus sent them forth, assigning to them a task which should not be accomplished till every creature had heard the glad tidings of salvation in his name, and all nations had been brought to sit under his shadow,—that at that time the very idea of a religion equally addressed to, and equally adapted to all nations, equally needed by, and equally suited to every child of Adam, was

wholly new, had never been broached, never been attempted to be realized. There was no form or system of idolatry that ever aimed at, or was indeed capable of such universality of embrace. The object of its worship was either confined to certain definite localities ; the gods of certain mountains, groves, or streams, whose worship was incapable of transfer ; or they were the offspring and expression of some peculiar state of society, whether savage or civilized, suited only to that particular state or condition of humanity in which they had their birth and being. It is true that in all the more educated nations of antiquity, there were men who soared far above the vulgar prejudices and superstitions of their times, whose religion, such as it was, had certainly nothing about it of that confinement by which the popular belief and worship were characterized ; but if free thus from one kind of confinement, their religion was all the more liable to another. Unfitted for the many, it was by eminence the religion of the few. Its disciples gloried in its exclusiveness. It would have lost half its charm in their eyes, had the people at large adopted it.

But there was no danger of that. It was essentially unfitted for the multitude. Its votaries would have laughed at the idea of trying to convert even a single village to their faith. Such, in the days of Jesus Christ, in all heathen countries, were the multiform idolatries of the many, the exclusive faith of the few. In Judea, it was somewhat different. Sacred books were circulating there, in which, under dark prophetic symbols, hints were given of a future gathering of all the nations under one great king and head. But these hints were universally misunderstood and misapplied. Amid all the confined and exclusive religions of that period, there was not one more confined, or more exclusive, than Judaism. Both socially and religiously, the Jew of the Saviour's time was one of the most shut up and bigoted of the race. Everything about him,—his dress, his food, his domestic customs, his religious ceremonies,—marked him off by a broad wall of separation from the rest of the species. He gloried in this distinction. He thought and spoke of himself and his brethren as the elect of God, the holy, the clean : the Gentiles were the

dogs, the polluted, the unclean. His attachment to his religion, as a faith proclaimed exclusively to his forefathers, and bequeathed by them as a national heritage to their children, was intense. His faith and his patriotism were one, and the deeper the patriotism the narrower the faith. And yet it is among this people ; it is from one who was brought up in one of its wildest districts ; it is from one for whom birth, position, education, had done nothing in the way of weaning him from the common prejudices of his countrymen, making him in that respect different from any other Jew ; it is from one who, save occasional visits to Jerusalem, never moved beyond the neighbourhood of a Galilean village, nor shared in the benefits of any other society than it supplied ;—it is from him that a religion emanates whose professed object is to gather into one, within its all-embracing arms, the whole human family. The very broaching of a project so original, so comprehensive, so sublime, at that time and in those circumstances, stands out as an event unique in the history of our race. In vain shall we try to explain it on the supposition that

it was the self-suggested scheme of the son of a Galilean tradesman. The very time and manner of its earthly birth claims for it a heavenly origin. Had Jesus Christ done nothing more than this,—set the idea for the first time afloat, that it was desirable and practicable to frame for the world a religious faith and worship which should have nothing of the confinements of country, or period, or caste, but be alike adapted to all countries, all periods, all kinds and classes of men,—he would have stood by himself and above all others.

But he did more than this. He not only announced the project, but he devised the instrument by which it was to be accomplished; he put that instrument in its complete and perfect form into the hands of those by whom it was to be employed. Study the history of all other revolutions, civil or religious, which have taken place upon this earth, and you will find it to be true of all of them, that the methods by which they were wrought out, were at first devised by different men and at lengthened intervals, and afterwards perfected by slow degrees. The men en-

gaged in effecting them had to feel their way forward; had often to retrace their steps; had often to cast aside an old instrument because it was found to be useless, or because a new and better one had been fallen upon in its stead. It has not been so with the establishment and propagation upon the earth of the religion of Jesus Christ. The instrumentality employed here has been the same from the beginning. It has never asked for, because it never needed, improvement or change. We have it now in our hands in the same form in which it was put by Christ himself into the hands of the first disciples of the faith. The experience of so many centuries has detected no flaw, revealed no weakness, provided no substitute. When Jesus said, Go, make disciples of all nations, he announced, —and that in the simplest, least ostentatious way, as if there were no novelty in the project, no difficulty in its execution, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that it should be taken up, as if it were the surest thing that it could be carried out,—he announced the most original, the broadest, the sublimest enterprise

that ever human hands have been called upon to accomplish. And when he said, Go, preach the gospel to every creature, he supplied, in its complete and perfect form, the instrument by which it was to be realized. And that simple gospel of the grace of God preached, proclaimed, made known among all nations, to every creature, has it not proved itself fitted for the work? No nation can claim this gospel as peculiarly its own. No class or kind of human beings can appropriate it to themselves. It speaks with the same voice, it addresses the same message to the wandering savage and to the civilized citizen, to the most abandoned reprobate and to the most correct and fastidious moralist. Its immediate and direct appeal is to the naked human conscience, to man as a sinner before his Maker. Wholly overlooking and ignoring all other distinctions of character and condition, it regards us all as on the common level of condemnation, under the sentence of that law which is holy and just and good. To each of us, as righteously condemned, it offers a free, full pardon through the death, an immediate and entire acceptance through the

merits and mediation, of Jesus Christ. It presents the means and influences by which a holy character and life may be attained on earth, and it opens up the way to a blissful immortality hereafter. If, looking simply at the outward means employed, we were asked wherein lay the secret of the immediate and immense power which the Christian religion at first exerted upon such multitudes of men, we should say that it was in the call it carried with it to every man, just as it found him, to repent, and repenting, enter into immediate peace with his Maker through Jesus Christ; in the assurance that it gave of God's perfect good-will to him, his perfect readiness to forgive and accept; the proclamation which it made that, by Christ's death, every let or hindrance had been removed, and that every sinful child of Adam was invited to enter into that rest which Christ had provided for all who came to him. Only think, when these tidings were new, and when they were at once heartily and cordially believed in, what a wonderful revolution in man's inner being they were fitted to effect! Can you wonder when, to

a world grown weary of its follies, its idolatries, its philosophies, its gropings in the dark, its struggles to find the truth, its passionate desire to know something of that world beyond the grave, for the first time it was told that God was not a God afar off but very near at hand, for he had sent his own Son into the world to make such a revelation of him that it could be said, Whosoever had seen him had seen the Father also ;— it was told that a life beyond the grave was no longer a matter of speculation, for Christ, the Son of the Eternal, had risen as the first-fruits of a coming general resurrection of the dead ;— it was told that access to God and to God's full favour was no longer a thing of doubt and time and difficulty, — to be reached, if reached at all, through prayer and priests, and services and sacrifices, — for a new and direct and open way had been revealed by God himself, through which any one might step at once into his gracious presence, into the full light of his reconciled countenance ; — it was told that the forgiveness of all his past sin was no longer a matter about which, to the last moment of his life, a man was to be kept

hanging between hope and fear, for through this man Christ Jesus there was offered to all who would accept it, an instant remission of all his sins ;—it was told that poor, weak, tempted, erring, sinful, suffering man had no longer to regard himself as an alien, an exile from the world of the pure and the blessed, frowned on by the beings, the powers, he worshipped, his whole life turned into a struggle by one or other kind of propitiatory offerings to keep on something like good terms with his conscience and his God, for there was *One* who had loved and suffered and died to save him ; a man like himself, and yet a God ; a man to pity, a God to protect ; a man to sympathize, a God to succour ; whose presence, companionship, friendship, were waiting to cheer his path in life, and illumine for him the dark valley of the shadow of death ;—can you wonder that when, in all its simplicity and in all its fulness of comfort and consolation, the gospel of the grace of God was first proclaimed to sinful men, it was hailed by thousands as indeed glad tidings from the far country ? Or, looking at the Scripture records,

can you wonder that the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, as they broke bread from house to house did eat their meat with such gladness and singleness of heart, praising God? Can you wonder, when with one accord the people of Samaria gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that there was great joy in that city? Can you wonder, when the Ethiopian treasurer had his eyes opened to see who it was who had been wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities, and found in Jesus the very Saviour that he needed, that he went on his way rejoicing? Can you wonder, when at Antioch and elsewhere the Gentiles heard for the first time all the words of this life, that "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord"? Many and great indeed were the hindrances which arose : slow often and difficult the progress that was made. But the way in which these hindrances generally acted, was to cloud with some obscurity the simple tidings of the love of God in Christ to sinful men ; to close the door that his grace had opened ; to fetter

with this condition or with that, the full reconciliation with our Maker into which we are all invited at once to enter ; more or less, in fact, to assimilate the religion of Jesus to all the other religions which have represented God's favour as a thing to be toiled for through life, and to be won, if won at all, only at its close,—the life itself to be passed in a sustained uncertainty as to whether it would be got at last or not,—whereas it is the distinction and the glory and the power of the gospel of the grace of God, that it holds out to us at the very first, as a gratuity, which it has cost Christ much to purchase, but which it costs us nothing to acquire,—the forgiving, loving favour of the Most High. It asks us to dismiss here all our doubts and fears ; to know and believe the love which God has to us ; to see in Jesus one in whom we can undoubtedly confide, who is absolutely to be depended on, in whom it is impossible that too much confidence can be reposed ; who by every way that love could devise, or the spirit of self-sacrifice achieve, has tried to get us to trust alone, unhesitatingly, habitually, for ever in him.

What is it—how often do we ask these hearts of ours—what is it that keeps us from welcoming such glad tidings? What is it which keeps these tidings from filling our hearts with a full and continued joy? What is it which keeps us from trusting one so entirely worthy of our confidence as Jesus Christ? Nothing whatever in the tidings; nothing in Him of whom the tidings speak.

Try if you can construct any form of words better fitted than those which meet you in the Bible, clearly and forcibly to express the idea that God is now in Jesus Christ most thoroughly prepared, is most entirely willing, to receive at once into his favour every repentant, returning child of Adam, and that there is not a single man anywhere, or upon any ground, shut out from coming and accepting this pardon—coming and entering into this peace. “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. Come unto me, *all* ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever


believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Any one—every one—all—whosoever; we know no other words which could more thoroughly take in all, excluding none. These, however, are but words. The great thing is to get fixed in the mind and heart that which these words point to and express; that the God whom we have offended approaches us in love, in Christ, assuring us of a gracious reception; the embrace of a Father's guiding, protecting arms, and the shelter hereafter of a Father's secure and blessed home.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Our Lord's forerunner had adopted the practice of baptizing those who desired to be regarded as his followers. His baptism, however, was figurative and incomplete. It was simply a baptism unto repentance. It was a faith only in the kingdom as at hand that was required of those who submitted to it. But the kingdom had

come. The day of Pentecost, on which it was to be visibly erected, was drawing near. Another higher and fuller baptism was now to be proclaimed, and then begin to be administered.

Baptizing into the name, not simply *in* the name, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; that might mean no more than performing the rite in the name, that is, by the authority of God. The name of God, we know, is the term commonly employed in Scripture to indicate the character and the nature of the Supreme. When the expression meets us, then—the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—we understand it as expressive of the one nature revealed to us in the three personalities of the Triune Jehovah. Now to be baptized into that name is to be taken up into, to be incorporated with him whose name is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The term is expressive or symbolic, not of a mere outward and formal acknowledgment or confession of our faith in the Divinity, as he has been pleased to reveal himself to us under that mysterious distinction of a threefold personality ; but of an inward and spiritual union, communion, fellow-

ship, with the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. The Israelites were all baptized unto Moses, and, as so baptized, were taken up into, and incorporated with, that spiritual community of which the Mosaic was an external type. They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink ; derived all their strength and refreshment from the same spiritual sources. And even so are all baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, emblematic of that oneness with each and all of the three Persons of the Trinity, which the Saviour had in his eye, when he prayed for his own, "That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." And that same oneness through Christ with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is it not equally if not still more distinctly and impressively held out to our view in the sacrament of the Supper ? "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion or common participation of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion or common participation of the body of Christ ? For we, being many, are one bread



and one body ; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Closest, loftiest, most blessed of all fellowships, that to which in Jesus Christ we are elevated, and of which our participation of the two sacraments of the Church is the external sign.¹

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The crowning glory of the gospel—of its proclamation of a free and full justification before God, alone through the merits of the Saviour—is this, that it opens the way and supplies the motive to a right and dutiful discharge of all commanded duty. Enthroning Christ in the heart, planting deep within it, as its strongest and most constraining motive, a supreme love to him, it produces an obedience which springs not from fear, but from love. "If ye love me," said Jesus to his disciples, "keep my commandments." He did not question or suspect the reality of their love. He knew there was a kind of love they all had to him. But that affection, tender as it was, might

¹ For additional remarks on the two Sacraments, see Appendix C.

not be strong ; regarding him mainly in the character of a companion or friend, it might fail to recognise him in the character of their Master, their Lord. ‘ If ye indeed love me, then,’ says Jesus, to them and to us, ‘ let not love die out in the mere feeling of attachment to my person ; let it find its becoming and appropriate expression in the keeping of my commandments ; so shall it be preserved from evaporating in the emotion of the hour ; so shall it be consolidated into a fixed, a strong, a permanent principle of action.’ All love, even that of equal to equal, if unexpressed, if unembodied, has a strong tendency to decline ; but if it be love of a dependant to a superior, of a servant to a master, the love which does not clothe itself in obedience, becomes spurious as well as weak. A bare acknowledgment in words, or in some formal act of bare profession of the fatherly or masterly relationship,—what is it worth if the authority of the father be disregarded, the orders of the master be disobeyed ? If we fail to regard Christ as the Lord of the conscience, the lawgiver of the life ; if our obligations to be all and do all he has commanded be

unfelt ; if the love we cherish to him go not forth into action,—such barren and unfruitful affection will not be recognised by him, who hath not only said, “ If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments,” but also, “ He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” On the other hand, if our love to Christ, however faint and feeble it be at the first, has not only an eye to see him and admire his beauty. but an ear to hear him and obey his word ; if under the strong conviction that to offer love without service to such a Saviour as Jesus is, would be but another variety of that mockery to which he was subjected in the judgment-hall of Pilate ; if the sincere and honest effort be put forth to obey the precepts he has given for the regulation of our heart and life,—then shall each fresh effort of that kind, however short it fall of its destined aim, exert the happiest influence upon the love from which it springs, quickening, expanding, elevating, intensifying it. Each new attempt to do his will shall reveal something more of the loveableness of the Redeemer’s character. The loving and the doing shall help each other on, till the loving


shall make the doing light ; and by the doing shall the loving be itself made perfect.

And one marked peculiarity of the obedience thus realized shall be this, that all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded will be attempted, at least, if not discharged. "Ye are my friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you ;" a test of friendship very sad and hopeless in the application of it, were it meant that whatsoever Christ has commanded must be done, up to the full measure and extent of his requirement, before we could be reckoned as his friends. Then were that friendship put altogether beyond our reach. A test, however, both true, and capable of immediate and universal application, if we regard it as meaning that it is by the universality of its embrace, and not by its perfection in any one individual instance, that the obedience of the Christian is characterized ; that there shall not be one command which is freely, wilfully, and habitually violated ; not one known duty which is not habitually tried to be discharged. As ever then we hope to be acknowledged as his friends, his true and faithful followers, let us esteem every

precept he hath given concerning everything to be right; and let us give ourselves to the unreserved, unrestricted doing of his will (Matt. v. 21, 27).

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Jesus had spoken much to his disciples about his departure from them, about his leaving them alone. “I go my way,” he had said to them in the upper chamber, “and none of you asketh, Whither goest thou? A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” It was in such an affectionate, sympathizing way that Jesus sought beforehand to prepare the minds and hearts of his disciples for the shock of his death, the sorrow of his departure. For a little while they did not see him; he was lost in the darkness of the sepulchre. Again, for a little while, they did see him, on

those few occasions when he made himself visible to them after his resurrection. Even, however, on one of the earliest of these appearances, he seemed at pains to remove the idea from his disciples' minds that he had returned in order to abide. "Touch me not," was his language to Mary, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father : but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It was as one on his way to the Father, tarrying but a little while on the earth, that he desired during the forty days to be recognised. But now, when in this great interview on the mountain side, he manifests forth his glory, takes to himself his great power, announces the universal sovereignty which had been put into his hands as the Mediator, issues the great commission upon which, in all ages, his followers were to act, he closes by speaking, not of his approaching departure, but of his continued, his abiding presence : "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Omnipotent reveals himself thus as the Omnipresent also : 'Go ye into all nations, Go




to the farthest corner of the habitable globe, but know that, go where you will, my presence goeth with you. Labour on, generation after generation, but know that the time shall never come when I shall leave you or forsake you. My bodily presence I remove ; with the eye of sense you soon shall see me no more ; but my spiritual presence shall never be withdrawn ; it shall abide with you continually, even to the end of the world, till I come again, till that time arrive when it shall no longer be said that I will come to you to live with you,—when I shall come to take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.’

The richest legacy he could have left to it is this promise of his abiding presence with the Church. Looking at the Church generally, at the church in any one country or in any one city, any one section of the church,—we may often wonder and be afraid as we contemplate the difficulties she has to contend with in going forth to execute the great errand upon which she has been sent. This is the light, however, in all the darkness. All power has been given to Christ in heaven and earth ; he has been con-

stituted Head over all things for the Church. This headship over all the principalities and powers of darkness, this power over all things in heaven and earth, shall he not employ in helping onward the great movement which is to give him the heathen for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession?

It is not indeed by bare might and power that this great conquest of the world is to be won. When Jesus says, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth, he does not add, Go ye therefore, and by the employment of so much of that power as I may please to communicate, subdue all mine enemies, uproot all rival thrones, set up and extend my kingdom. No ; but, Go teach and preach, instruct, persuade ; the conversion of the world to me must be a thing of willingness, and not of compulsion. They must be taught ; for how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent ? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the



Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But not only must they be taught, the people must be made willing in the day of the Lord's power,—a power which shall work on them, not from without but from within, drawing them to himself. But how shall that power be brought into full and living operation? It comes, it works according to our faith, in answer to our prayers; it comes through the realizing of the presence of the Saviour; the pleading for the promise of the Spirit to be fulfilled. Do we ask ourselves why is it that so many hundred years have rolled away since these words were spoken in Galilee; since the world was given by him into the hands of his followers, to go out upon it, and reclaim it unto God, and yet so little progress has been made towards the great consummation; not half the globe yet even nominally won? The answer is at hand: Our lack of faith; our lack of prayer; our lack of efforts undertaken in the name, and prosecuted in the promised strength of the Redeemer.


But this great parting promise of our Lord is

to be taken by us as addressed not merely to the Church at large in her collective capacity, or as engaged in her public work of propagating the truth as it is in Jesus. It is to be taken as addressed to every individual Christian. "Behold," says Jesus, "I stand at the door, and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." I will come ; I and my Father will come. We will come. Was ever such a plural used as that ! Who is he who associates himself in this way with the omnipresent and omnipotent Jehovah, who engages for the Father, and what he engages for the Father undertakes equally himself ? We will come to him, not to pay a transient visit, not as the wayfaring man who turns aside to tarry but for a night. We will take up our abode with him. To have these words of Jesus realized in one's daily, hourly life, to know and believe that he is indeed with us, beside us, has come to us, has taken up his abode

with us, this is our comfort and our strength. Nothing short of this will do. No general belief in all that Jesus was and did and suffered here on earth, no belief in anything about him, nothing but himself in living, loving presence, seen and felt by us, as a presence as real as that of the closest companionship of life; as real, but a thousand times closer, a thousand times more precious.

How well he knows this who has said and done so much to encourage his people in all ages to realize his presence with them in all the stages of their earthly life! A famine drives Isaac from Judea. He halts at Gerar, meditating a still farther flight. The Lord appears to him and says to him, "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and will bless thee." Let the patriarch but know and feel that the Lord is with him, and no fear shall drive him from the place which that God hath appointed as his habitation. Sleeping Jacob lies with his head upon the stony pillow; the vision comes to him by night; the Lord speaks to him from the top of the mystic ladder: "Behold, I am with

thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Let Jacob but carry a sense of that presence along with him, and his solitary path and his fears of exile shall be lightened, and that future, so dark to him as he fled from his father's presence, shall be turned into light. It was a heavy task for hands like Joshua's to undertake to be successor to such a man as Moses. When that great leader of the people died, how destitute and helpless must Joshua have felt! What a crowd of difficulties must have risen up before his mind, as standing in the way of the invasion and the conquest of Canaan! But all his discouragements were met by that word of Jehovah: "Be strong and of a good courage; as I was with Moses, so shall I be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." Solomon had almost as difficult a succession to fill as Joshua. It was no easy duty to take David's place, and to carry out his great design. But there was a way in which



he might have been strengthened for the task. "If," said the Lord to him, "thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, *I will be with thee*, and build thee a sure house." And still, whatever be the peculiarities of our lot in life, the nature of the duties we have to discharge, the difficulties to contend with, the trials to bear, the temptations to meet, still it is the fulfilment of that most gracious promise, *I will be with thee*, which alone can bear us up, and bear us through. Let us rest more simply and entirely on it, trying, as we advance in life, to have more and more of the spirit of the Psalmist, as he looked out upon the future and said, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life ; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

IX.

THE ASCENSION.¹


THERE are ten appearances of our Saviour after his resurrection recorded in the New Testament. So many as five of them occurred on the day of the resurrection : those, namely, to Mary Magdalene, to the Galilean women,² to Peter, to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, to the ten apostles and others assembled in the evening within the upper chamber. The sixth appearance was to the eleven and the rest on the evening of the seventh day from that on which he rose from the dead. The seventh—spoken of by John as the *third* time that he showed himself, inasmuch as it was the third occasion upon which he had met with them collectively, or in any considerable number together—was to the seven disciples by the sea of Tiberias. The eighth

¹ Luke xxiv. 44-53; Acts i. 3-8.

² See Appendix D.

was the great manifestation on the mountain side of Galilee. The ninth, of which we should have known nothing but for the simple record of it preserved in the fifteenth chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, was to James the brother of the Lord; and finally, the tenth, on the occasion of the ascension. There may have been other unrecorded appearances of our Lord. It is nowhere said in the Gospels or Epistles that there were none else besides the ones related therein. But the nature of the case, and the manner of the narrative, forces upon us the belief that if there were any such, they must have partaken of the character of the manifestation to James; having a private and personal, rather than a public object in view. But why, if his interviews with his followers were so few, his intercourse with them so brief, so broken, so reserved, did Jesus remain on earth so long? Why were so many as forty days of an existence such as his spent by him in this way? It may seem useless even to put a question to which no satisfactory answer can be given, inasmuch as, beyond the mere statement that he afforded

thereby many infallible proofs of his resurrection, nothing explicit is said in the Scriptures as to the particular object or design of this lingering of our Lord so long upon the earth. And yet it is scarcely possible for us to forget, or to fail in being struck by it, that this period of forty days was one which had already been signalized in the history of redemption ; and looking at the other instances in which it meets our eye in the Scripture narrative, we are tempted to put the question, Was it as Moses was withdrawn from men, to spend these forty days in fasting and prayer on the Mount with God, as the fit and solemn preparation for the promulgation of the Law through his hands at Sinai ? Was it as Elijah was carried away into the wilderness, to fast and pray there for forty days, to prepare him for his great work as the restorer of the Law in Israel ? Was it as Jesus himself, after his baptism, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to fast there forty days, and at the end to be tempted of the devil, to fit him for that earthly ministry which was to close in his death upon the cross ? Was it even so that now, for another




forty days, our Lord was detained on earth, as the suitable preface or prelude to his entrance upon that higher stage of the mediatorial work in which he is to sit upon the throne, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool ?

Passing, however, from a topic which must remain shrouded in obscurity, let us take up the incidents of our Lord's parting interview with his apostles. They have returned from Galilee, and are now once more at Jerusalem. There might have been some specific instruction to that effect delivered in private to themselves, or communicated to them through James, which brought the disciples back from Galilee to Jerusalem. But we do not need to suppose that it was so, in order to account for the movement ; for let us remember that this period of forty days was immediately preceded by the great festival of the Passover, and followed by that of Pentecost, both of which required the presence of the apostles at Jerusalem. It was not till the first of them was over that they could well leave the Holy City, and so you find them remaining there for a week after the resur-

rection. And now the promised and appointed meeting in Galilee having taken place, the approach of the second festival naturally invited their return. However it came about, the fortieth day after the resurrection saw the eleven and their companions once more assembled at Jerusalem. Christ's former meetings with them there collectively had been in the evening, in the closed chamber, where they had assembled in secret for fear of the Jews. This last one, though we know not when or how it commenced, may have begun in the same upper chamber already hallowed by the former meetings, but it was obviously at an earlier hour, and took place in the broad daylight. The first, or earlier part of it—that spent within the city—appears to have been devoted to the renewal and expansion of such instructions as he had delivered to the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus. We gather this from the 44th to the 47th verses of the 24th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. It is very natural to read these verses in immediate connexion with those which go before, and to regard them simply as a continuation of the

narrative of what occurred at that meeting on the evening of the resurrection day. And so indeed, in common with the majority of readers, we were at first disposed to regard them. By reading on to the end of the chapter, however, you will at once perceive that the narrator, without any note or mark of time, has condensed into one short and continuous statement all that he had then to say about the period between the resurrection and the ascension ; omitting so entirely all mention of any after day or after meetings, that if you had had nothing but this last chapter of Luke to guide you, you might have imagined—indeed, could not well have thought anything else—that the ascension had taken place on the very evening of the resurrection day. The same narrative, however, Luke has, in the first chapter of the Acts, filled up, and broken down into its parts the brief and summary notice with which he had closed his Gospel. And it is when we compare what he says in the one writing with what he says in the other, that we become persuaded that the verses from the 44th downwards of the last chapter in his Gospel belongs to and describes,

not what happened in the evening interview on the day of the resurrection, but what happened in the last interview of all on the day of the ascension ; for you will notice as common to the two accounts, the peremptory injunction laid upon the apostles, that they were not to leave Jerusalem till the promise of the Father had been fulfilled, and the baptism of the Spirit had been conferred. Such an injunction would not have been proper to the occasion of the first interview in the upper chamber. They were to leave Jerusalem, and in point of fact did leave it, after that meeting, to see the Lord in Galilee. According, however, to the account contained in the Acts of the Apostles, it was after the command had been given that they should not depart from Jerusalem that Jesus spake to them of their being witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth ; an announcement which corresponds with that contained in the 47th and 48th verses of the chapter in the Gospel, leading us naturally to conclude that these verses relate to the final meeting on the ascension day. We



must make a break somewhere in the chapter of the Gospel ; and it seems, on the whole, much more natural and consistent to make it at the end of the 43d than at the 48th verse.


Adopting, then, this idea, we have the fact before us that, in the first instance, when he met with the eleven in the course of that day on which he was taken up into heaven, our Saviour occupied himself with showing them how needful it was that all things that had been written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms regarding him should be fulfilled ; with showing them how exactly many of their ancient prophecies had met with their fulfilment in the manner and circumstances of his death ; with showing them how it behoved him to suffer, and through suffering to reach the throne of that kingdom which he came to set up on the earth ;—at once unfolding to them the Scriptures, and opening their minds to understand them. As on the first, so now on the last day of his being with them, this was the **chosen** theme on which he dwelt ; this the lesson **upon** which a larger amount of pains and care

were bestowed by our Lord after his resurrection than upon any other. What weight and worth does this attach to these Old Testament testimonies to his Messiahship ! what a sanction does it lend to our searching of their prophetic records, in the belief that we shall find much there pointing, in prophecy and type and figure, to the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

Our Lord's exposition of these Scriptures could not have been wholly in vain. The veil which had been upon the hearts of his apostles in their former reading of the prophecies must have been at least partially removed. Their notions of a Messiah coming only to conquer, only to restore and establish and extend the old Jewish theocracy, must have been materially altered and rectified. When, then, after all these expositions of their Master,—after all the fresh light he had thrown upon the true nature of his kingdom and the manner of its establishment, you find them coming to him and saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ? it could

scarcely be that, ignoring all they had just heard, and clinging still to their first belief, they were inquiring about an immediate erection of that temporal and visible kingdom which had previously so engrossed their thoughts and hopes. Let us rather believe that, accepting all which Jesus had taught them, admitting now fully the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah, their conceptions altered and elevated at once as to the kind of kingdom he was to set up, and the way in which that kingdom was to be established and advanced,—building upon these new foundations, their old spirit of curiosity found now a new object on which to fasten. They saw now the need there was that Jesus should have suffered all these things ; but still there was a kingdom which, through these sufferings, he was to reach, a glory on which, when these were over, he was to enter. Still there lay within these prophecies, which their minds had now been opened to understand, many a wonderful announcement of the part which Israel was to take in the erection and consolidation of the Redeemer's empire upon this earth. So much had already been accomplished

by their Lord and Master. He had been wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities; it had pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief,—was he now instantly to see of the travail of his soul; to divide the portion with the great, the spoil with the strong? Were nations that knew not him to run unto him; was he to be exalted as Governor among the nations; were all the ends of the earth to remember and turn unto the Lord, all the kindreds of the nations to worship before him; was his law to go forth of Zion, and his word from Jerusalem; and were the nations, as it had been predicted they should do in the latter days, the days of the Messiah's reign, to be heard saying, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob?—Lord, they say to him, with some such thoughts floating vaguely through their minds, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Jesus, in answering that question, does not blame, does not rebuke; says nothing that would imply that they were radically wrong in the hopes which they were cher-



ishing ; that there was no such kingdom as that they were asking about. Nay, rather, does he not assume that the kingdom was to be restored to Israel ; that the question was only one as to time ; that it was here, in their too eager haste and impatience, that the error of the disciples lay ? “ And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power ;” a somewhat different declaration from that which Jesus made when, speaking of the time of his own second advent, he said, “ Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of God,” no, not even the Son in his character as the great prophet and revealer of the future to the Church, but the Father only. But he does not say that he himself was ignorant of the times and the seasons. He only says that it was not for them, the disciples, to know them. They were among the secret things which the Father had reserved and kept within his own power, to reveal when and how and to whom he pleased. Would that these words of Jesus—among the last he ever uttered—had been sufficiently pondered by our prophetic interpreters in

their prying into the unknown future which lies before us. Curiosity as to that future is not unnatural. There are so many things to make us desire to see things otherwise and better ordered than they now are. There lie too on the pages of prophecy so many things which remain yet to be accomplished, such bright and glorious visions of a coming period of triumph for the truth, a coming reign of peace and virtue and piety upon this earth, that we are not disposed to quarrel much with those whose eyes are turned longingly upon a future out of whose pregnant bosom such great and glorious things are to emerge. But we are most imperatively bound to keep our curiosity here under that check which the hand of the Redeemer himself has laid upon it, and to remember that he has told us of many things which are yet to come to pass, not that we might be able to predict them, to specify beforehand the dates of their arrival, but that when they do come to pass we might believe.

But if that kind of knowledge which they were seeking for was denied to the disciples, another and better thing was to be given them

instead. They were to receive power from on high to execute that great mission upon which they were to be sent forth ; that mission was to consist in their proclaiming everywhere repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus ; and beginning at Jerusalem as the centre, they were to go forth, not as prophets of the future, but as witnesses of the past, witnesses for Christ, to carry the glad tidings abroad through all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Three things are noticeable here :

1. The simplicity of the gospel message as originally promulgated by Christ himself. Repentance, a turning from all evil, a turning with true and penitent spirit to God ; remission of sins, the covering of all past transgression by an act of grace on the part of God ; the remission of sins, offered in the name of Jesus, coming only, but coming directly, immediately, fully, in and through the name of him who is the one all-prevalent Mediator between man and God ;—such was the burden of that simple message which, in parting from them, Jesus committed to his disciples to make known over all the earth.

2. The wider and wider compass of that sphere over which this message was to be borne by them. Upon the universality of its embrace,—its being a message for all mankind, for men of every age and country, character and condition,—we have already, in our last lecture, commented ; but let us not overlook the fact as pointing to the true order in which all evangelistic labours should be prosecuted, that the apostles were to begin at Jerusalem, to go throughout all Judea, to penetrate Samaria with the glad tidings, and then to bear them on to the uttermost parts of the earth. Whatever else may have lain at the bottom of these instructions, this at least is apparent, that their own capital, their own country, their own kindred, their own immediate neighbours were first to have the tender made to them. Are we wrong in interpreting the direction of our Saviour as implying that all Christian effort should be from the centre to the circumference ; should be so directed as to fill the inner circles first,—the circles of our own heart, our own home, our own city, our own country ; and that if, overlooking these, neglecting these, we

busy ourselves among the broader, wider, outer circles, we are reversing the order and running counter to the directions of the Master whom we serve? I shall not venture here to say how much better I think it would be for ourselves and for others, for Christianity and for the world, if, instead of embarking in enterprises which fascinate by the wideness of their scope, but upon which, just because of that wideness, so much labour is wasted, each man were to cultivate the little sphere which lies more immediately around him.

3. We notice the qualification for Christian work, the baptism of the Holy Spirit bestowing the needed power. The apostles had a great commission given, a great task assigned; the wide world set forth as the field of their future labours. But they were not as yet prepared to execute this commission, to take up this work. They were to wait in Jerusalem; to wait some days; do nothing but wait and pray and hope; a good and useful lesson in itself, subduing, restraining the spirit of eager and impatient self-confidence—a lesson which is still in force;

that pause, that period of inaction, those ten days of stillness between the day of the ascension and the day of Pentecost, as full of instruction still to us as of benefit originally to the disciples. And when the baptism of fire at last was given, the wanting element was supplied, said here by Christ himself to be *power* : "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Not knowledge so much was wanted but power ; a firmer grasp of truth already known ; a stronger, deeper, steadier attachment to a Saviour already loved ; conviction, affection ripened into abiding, controlling, enduring principle of action ; power to be, to do, to suffer. Is not that the very thing which in religion we all most need ; the very thing we feel we cannot ourselves attain ; the very thing which it requires the baptism of a heavenly influence to bestow ?

But let us follow Jesus to the mount called

Olivet. His closing counsels given, he leads his disciples out of the city. Did they, in open day, pass along through the streets of Jerusalem? If they did, how many wondering eyes would rest upon the well-known group of Galilean fishermen; how many wondering eyes would fix upon the leader of that group—the Jesus of Nazareth, whom six weeks before they had seen hanging upon the cross at Calvary. Little heeding the looks which they attract, they pass through the city gate. They are now on a well-known track; they cross the Kedron; they approach Gethsemane. We lose sight of them amid the deep shadows of these olive-trees. Has Jesus paused for a moment to look, for the last time, with those human eyes of his, upon the sacred spot where he cast himself on the night of his great agony, upon the ground? Once more they emerge; they climb the hill-side; they cross its summit; they are approaching Bethany. He stops; they gather round. He looks upon them; he lifts his hands; he begins to bless them. What love unutterable in that parting look; what untold riches in that blessing! His hands are uplifted; his lips are

engaged in blessing, when slowly he begins to rise : earth has lost her power to keep ; the waiting, up-drawing heavens claim him as their own. An attraction stronger than our globe is on him, and declares its power. He rises ; but still as he floats upward through the yielding air, his eyes are bent on these up-looking men ; his arms are stretched over them in the attitude of benediction, his voice is heard dying away in blessings as he ascends. Awe-struck, in silence they follow him with straining eye-balls, as his body lessens to sight, in its retreat upward into that deep blue, till the commissioned cloud enfolds, cuts off all further vision, and closes the earthly and sensible communion between Jesus and his disciples. That cloudy chariot bore him away, till he was "received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God."

How simple, yet how sublime, how pathetic this parting ! No disturbance of the elements, no chariot of fire, no escort of angels ; nothing to disturb or distract the little company from whom he parts ; nothing to the very last to break in upon that close and brotherly communion, which is

continued as long as looking eye and listening ear can keep it up. But who shall tell us, when these earthly links were broken, and that cloud carried him to the farthest point in which cloud could form or float, and left him there; who shall tell us what happened above, beyond, on the way to the throne; in what new form of glory, by what swift flight, attended by what angel escort, accompanied by what burst of angelic praise, that throne of the universe was reached? Our straining eyes, we too would turn upward to those heavens which received him, and wonder at the reception which awaited him there, till on our ears there falls that gentle rebuke, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" 'Think not with eyes like yours to pierce that cloud which hides the world of spirits from mental vision. Enough for you to know that this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go.'


This mild rebuke was given to the men of Galilee upon the mountain top by two men in white apparel, who stood beside them, their presence unnoted till their words had broken the

deep silence, and drawn upon themselves that gaze hitherto directed towards heaven, but which had now nothing above on which to rest; two angels, perhaps the two who had watched and waited by the empty sepulchre; one of them the same who in the hour of his great agony had been sent to strengthen the sinking Saviour in the Garden, now stationed here at Olivet to soften, as it were, to the disciples the sorrow of this parting, to turn that sorrow into joy. But how at that moment, when they were discharging this kindly but humble office, were the heavenly host engaged? Surely, if at the emerging out of chaos of this beautiful and orderly creation, those sons of God chanted together the new world's birthday hymn; surely, if in that innumerable host above the plains of Bethlehem, a great multitude of them celebrated, in notes of triumph, a still better and more glorious birth—the entire company of the heavenly host must have struck their harps to the fullest, noblest, richest anthem that ever they gave forth, as the great Son of God, the Saviour of mankind—his earthly sorrows over, his victories over Satan, sin,

and death complete—sat down that day with the Father on his throne, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. Did these two angels who were left behind on earth, who had this humbler task assigned them, feel at all as if theirs were a lower, meaner service? No, they had too much of the spirit of Him who had for forty days kept that throne waiting to which he had now ascended, that he might tabernacle still a little longer with the children of men; nor were they ignorant of that word of his, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me.”

“Why gaze ye up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” This is not a final departure of this Jesus from the world he came to save. That was not the last look the earth was ever to get of him that you got of him as the clouds covered him from your view. He is to come again; to come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. But for that, per-

haps the disciples might have returned to Jerusalem with sad and downcast spirits, as those from whose head their Master had been for ever taken away. As it was, they returned, we are told, with great joy ; the sorrow of the departure swallowed up in the hope of the speedy return. So vivid, indeed, was the expectation cherished by the first Christians of the second advent of the Lord, that it needed to be chastened and restrained. They required to have their hearts directed into a patient waiting for that coming. It is very different with us. We require to have that faith quickened and stimulated, which they needed to have chastened and restrained. It is more with wonder than with great joy that we return from witnessing the ascension of our Lord. But let us remember that though the heavens have received him, it is not to keep him there apart for ever from this world. He himself cherishes no such feeling of retirement and separation now that he has ascended up on high. I have spoken to you of his last words of blessing which fell audibly upon fleshly ears. But what are the very last words that in vision he uttered : "He that



testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly.” Our crowned Saviour waits; with eager expectancy waits the coming of the day when his presence shall be again revealed among us. It may seem slow to us, that evolution of the ages which is preparing all things for his approach. But with him who says, I come quickly, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; and as soon as the curtain shall drop on the last act of that great drama of which this earth is now the theatre, then, quick as love and power can carry him, shall the same Jesus be here again on earth, —coming in like manner as these men of Galilee saw him go up to heaven. Are we waiting for that coming, longing for that coming, hastening to that coming? Are we ready, as he says to us, “Behold, I come quickly,” to add as our response, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.—P. 18.

As so closely connected with the subject of our Lord's Resurrection, the author ventures to present to the reader the following extracts from an unpublished course of Lectures on the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

"Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."--1 COR. xv. 12-20.

St. Paul had learned that there were some among the Corinthian converts to Christianity who affirmed that there was to be no resurrection of the dead. A belief

in that resurrection has so long, so universally, and so strongly been established in the breasts of all calling themselves by the Christian name,—it is so thoroughly recognised as an integral part of the Christian faith, that we find some difficulty in conceiving that at any time any who professed themselves to be believers in Christ should have doubted or denied it. Let us remember, however, that even among the Jews, up to the time of the resurrection of our Lord himself, the doctrine of the future general resurrection of the dead had not been revealed with such plainness as to prevent the whole sect of the Sadducees from openly denying it. They accepted the Mosaic revelation ; their title to be regarded as holders of the Jewish faith was not questioned ; and yet they repudiated the belief that the dead were to rise again. Outside Judea the notion of a future resurrection of all the dead was so novel and so startling, that we are not to wonder that a difficulty should have been felt in admitting, or a disposition displayed—even by those who otherwise lent a favourable ear to the first teachings of Christianity—to reject it. In that broad Gentile world which the first evangelists of the Cross invaded and sought to win over to Christianity, there were two elements that rose up in strong antagonism to the idea of the resurrection of the dead. There was the materialistic Epicurean form of infidelity—twin-sister of the Sadducean spirit among the Jews—which refused to

listen to anything beyond what sense or consciousness made known. This spirit was rife at Athens. Paul had already found it there. The men of Athens listened to him patiently enough for a time, till he spake of the resurrection of the dead, when they turned them mockingly and impatiently away : the very notion of a future embodiment of that spirit, which at death passed they knew not whither or into what, being far too gross and too tangible for them to receive. Then there was another and very opposite spirit, begotten in the school of Oriental speculation, with which the doctrine of the resurrection came into the sharpest and most direct collision,—the spirit of those teachers of the Gnostic philosophy, who asserted that the source of all evil lay in matter ; the source of all sin in the soul's connexion with the body. With them, liberation from the body was emancipation from all evil ; reunion with the body would be a reduction of the soul once more into the bondage of corruption. Many who cherished this deep abhorrence of matter joined the Christian ranks, and struggled hard to retain as much as they could of their old impressions and beliefs in conjunction with their new faith in Jesus Christ. Of such, in all likelihood, were Hymeneus and Philetus, referred to by Paul some years afterwards in his Second Epistle to Timothy, as having erred concerning the faith, saying that the resurrection was past already. Seeking to

spiritualize everything, they said that the only resurrection was the regeneration of the soul, the moral renewal of the inner man of the heart, which was already over with all who were made new men in Jesus Christ.

Of these three leavens—the Jewish Sadducean, the Greek Epicurean, or the Oriental Gnostic—it is impossible now to tell which it was that had infected at so early a period the Church of Corinth. We have only the fact before us, that there were some within that Church who said that there was to be no resurrection of the dead. Otherwise they had received in all its simplicity and in all its fulness the gospel that Paul taught ; he had not to complain of them as having ever felt or expressed any doubt as to that eternal life held out to them in Christ, neither had they questioned the fact of Christ's own resurrection as an incident in his history that had often been recounted to them. But animated by one or other of the tendencies that have been already alluded to, they had put away from them a belief in the general resurrection of the dead. They saw and felt no inconsistency in doing so. They thought that they could be as good Christians as ever, and yet give up that one belief. They did not see how unbelief on that one topic would, if admitted and cherished, spread itself around ; how it went to sap and undermine the entire fabric of Christianity, to overturn the very trust and .

hope that they themselves were clinging to. To convince them of all this, and by working such conviction, to eradicate the rising error, is the main object of the apostle in the 15th chapter of the Epistle. . .

You have a good specimen in the verses immediately before us of that rapid, condensed, impassioned kind of reasoning in which Paul so frequently indulges. There were some at Corinth, he had been informed, who, having made public profession of their faith in Christ, were nevertheless disposed to deny that there should be a resurrection of the dead. At once the incompatibility of the general faith with the particular denial rises before the apostle's thoughts. This incompatibility he hastens to expose. Have they thought—these deniers of a resurrection from the dead—of all which that denial fairly and directly involves? Have they thought of the inconsistencies, the absurdities, the incredibilities that by necessity and immediate implication flow out of it? These he presses on their regard, not in the way of laboured or lengthened argument, but in brief emphatic declarations, well fitted to confound as well as to convince,—to stir the conscience and the heart too, as by the voice of a trumpet. I am very conscious how much such a series of short, terse statements must suffer by any attempt to expand them. But as some accidental benefits may perhaps accompany the attempt, let us take up in order the fatal conse-

quences charged here by Paul upon a denial of the resurrection of the dead.

Ver. 13.—“ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.”¹ The resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of Christ are, in the apostle’s judgment, so inseparably connected, that they must stand and fall together. If you believe one, you must believe both ; if you reject one, you must reject both. But how is this ? What is the link of connexion between the two events that necessitates this common acceptance or common rejection of them both ? What is it that makes it anything like a direct and inevitable conclusion, from the dead not rising, that Christ had not risen ? One can readily enough see how that, if the resurrection of the dead generally were denied upon the ground of its strangeness, its undesirableness, its alleged impossibility, then it must be denied in every instance ; to be consistent, you must carry your denial round the whole circle of humanity, and take in the man Christ Jesus with all the rest. More than this, however, seems to be indicated here. The apostle points to some other more hidden nexus or bond of union between the two events that he so knits together, than that of their being alike mysterious in their character, alike difficult of accomplishment. As serving to bring out to view what that nexus is, let us notice, that

¹ Ver. 16.—“ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.”

it is not of the resurrection of all the dead promiscuously, —it is of the resurrection of believers ; it is of that resurrection unto life which involves the deliverance of the soul at death from all the fruits and consequences of its transgressions, and its reunion afterwards with the body from which it was to suffer a temporary separation ; it is of that kind of resurrection, and of it exclusively, that the apostle speaks. It was to obtain and secure for all true believers in him the benefits and blessedness of such a resurrection, that Christ both died and rose and revived. He rose from the sepulchre on their account. He rose, not as an isolated member of the human family, to whom it might be given to burst the barriers of the tomb, whilst all the others remained within its hold. Were no other connexion looked at as existing between Christ and those who were to rise again, than that of their being joint partakers of the same human nature, it would be difficult to perceive any great force in the argument, that if they were not to rise, he could not have risen. There seems no such tie existing between the entire membership of the human family, as to shut out the possibility that there might have been that one solitary instance of a resurrection from the dead. But bring in the idea of a vital union between Christ and his own ; bring in the idea that he is the Resurrection and the Life in this sense, that he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he rise

again, that whosoever liveth by believing in him shall never die ; bring in the idea that Jesus rose not from the dead in his individual capacity, but as the head and representative of all those whom he was to redeem from death and ransom from the power of the grave,—and then it is that a meaning and a force is given to the declaration, “ If *they* rise not, then is he not risen.” His resurrection, in its true significance, in its great design, never can have taken place if it draw not that other resurrection of all his people in its train.

2. Ver. 14.—But “ If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain.” It is an idle empty tale this gospel that we have been preaching. You not only deprive it of its closing convincing evidence, you take out of it its very pith and marrow, if you cast away from you the truth that Jesus rose again from the dead ; for, is it not upon that rising of his to God’s right hand as the accepted and prevailing Mediator, that faith builds its hope of pardon and acceptance before God ? Had our gospel stopped here, that Christ died for our sins ; had we had nothing more to tell you, than that he sank beneath the load of our iniquities that pressed him down to death,—where were there evidence to rebut the allegation that beneath that load he still was lying ; where the proof that that death of his for our transgressions, in the Father’s judgment was sufficient, and had by him been accepted as such ? It is that rising again

of the great Sin-bearer ; his triumphant enthronement by the side of his Father in heaven, which proclaims the sacrifice complete, the atonement adequate. It is because it embraces this within the glad tidings that it proclaims, that this gospel which we preach is indeed a gospel whereon all may securely stand, and by which the very chief of sinners may be saved. Vain, all-powerless as an instrument of comfort would the gospel be, if it pointed only to the death and the burial, the shrouded cross and the sealed sepulchre, leaving the body of the Crucified within that grave wherein man had never lain before, but leaving it to share the common fate of all the buried inmates of the tomb. And as vain in that case would be your faith as was our preaching ; vain, because wanting that solid substantial basis to rest upon, which the resurrection of Christ supplies. Take that foundation from under it, and then see how unsettled and insecure your faith in Christ—your faith in him as the Redeemer of the lost, the Saviour of your soul—would be.

Verse 15.—“Yéa, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ : whom he raised not, if so be that the dead rise not.” False witnesses ; not mistaken, deceived witnesses, but false witnesses, testifiers to that which was not true, and testifiers to its being true, themselves knowing it to be false. There was here,

as to that fact of the resurrection, no room for mistake. It was a fact or it was a falsehood. Peter, James, the Twelve, the Five Hundred, all said that they had seen the Lord ; that he had spoken with them, ate with them, showed them his hands and his side—been at pains to prove to them that it was no shadowy form of their own imagination, that it was his true and real self, emerged from Joseph's sepulchre, that they looked upon. Either all that was true, or they were wilful, intentional deceivers, trying to palm a falsehood upon the world. Twenty years had passed since the alleged event had happened. These twenty years had sifted that testimony, had searched it more thoroughly than any personal cross-examination, however rigorous. The witnesses were numerous enough, scattered enough, independent enough ; they had repeated their evidence often enough, and in circumstances varied enough to have brought out any inconsistency, to have detected any attempted collusion. Had any signs or token of imposition ever been discovered in any of them ? Could any motive for imposture be conceived ? What had they made of it, what were they ever likely to make of it, by proclaiming and repeating it, that Jesus had risen from the grave ?

Yea, and among these men branded thus as false witnesses, if Christ did not really rise, Paul himself must be reckoned. That *he* should ever have such a

brand affixed to him, that he should ever once be thought of as an impostor, a deceiver ; is there not something in the very manner of Paul's speech here, that tells us how monstrous to himself, and surely as incredible to others, the very supposition seemed ? So far as it is or can be a mere matter of human testimony, we would be willing to peril the whole fate of Christianity upon the evidence of that one witness, Paul ; that evidence as it lies before us in his letters written at different times, from different places, in different circumstances, to different persons ; so frank, so full, so overflowing, the whole thought, the whole heart of the man, so unrestrainedly poured forth. Read these letters, and say, is it possible that you could have got a man more thoroughly qualified, by his intelligence and his clear-sightedness, and early acquaintance both with the Jewish and Gentile faiths, to decide upon the matter,—his birth, his education, his position, his earthly prospects, all tending to create a bias against and not in favour of the new faith ? How are you to account for it, that there upon the spot ; there within so short a time after the crucifixion of our Lord ; there, with every means lying open to him of examining into the truth of all the facts and miracles of our Lord's history, such a man became a convert to Christianity ? We have his own account of that conversion, an account which if we accept as true determines the whole matter ; but even setting that account aside, look at the after-

life and labours, toils and sufferings of this man, crowned at last with the martyr's death. How are we to account for them on any other supposition than that of the truth of Christianity? If anything that the other apostles testified as to the facts of the Saviour's life had been false, Paul must have found it out; and had he found it out, would he not have been the first and the loudest in proclaiming it? If ever there was an honest seeker after the truth; if ever there was an ardent lover of the truth; if ever there was a devoted adherent to the truth, a man who would do all and dare all to get at it, and would bear all and sacrifice all rather than part with or deny it,—that man was Paul. Can any one read his Epistles with the shadow of a doubt as to his entire truthfulness, earnestness, integrity of thought and purpose? Paul a false witness! do we not now scout the very idea of it as promptly and almost as indignantly as, eighteen hundred years ago, when he first penned the 15th verse of this chapter, Paul scouted it himself.

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” Those sins of yours Jesus took upon him, made them virtually his own, bare them in his own body on the tree. It was for those sins he died; died that he might redeem or deliver you from all their bitter fruits, that he might ransom you from the power of the grave; but if he have not risen, if death still hold him in its stiff and unrelaxed embrace,

if the grave still keep in its stern custody that body which was wounded for your transgressions,—then, brethren, the sting has not been taken from the last enemy, the victory has not been wrested from the grave, that death of Christ has failed in realizing its predicted issue. Instead of triumphing in your stead and on your behalf over death, death has triumphed over him, leaving thus your deliverance unaccomplished. And if so, then are ye yet in your sins; the whole weight of their guilt still lieth upon you; the whole burden of their penalty remains yet to be borne. It is a strange, let us even say an incredible or impossible hypothesis that Paul puts, that Christ should have taken on him our sins, yet sunk beneath the burden thus voluntarily assumed; but do not the very form in which that hypothesis is here presented, and the conclusion drawn from the temporary assumption of its truth,—namely, that in that case these Corinthian believers would still be in their sins,—do they not necessarily enfold within them the great truth that Christ's death was designed to be a vicarious atoning sacrifice whereby the whole guilt of all those sins that we truly repent of, and truly lay by faith on him, was to be lifted off us, removed by him? Refuse that character to the Saviour's death, and what meaning do you leave to the language, what force to the reasoning that the apostle here employs?

The whole passage, indeed, now before us is stripped (it seems to me) of significance, of coherence, of all argumentative weight and power, if such a sacrificial, a sin-bearing character, be not attached to that great de-
cease accomplished at Jerusalem. You may convince yourselves of this by trying how the passage would read, how the inferences it contains would hold upon any view of the death of our Redeemer which rejects the idea of a true and sufficient atonement having been thereby made for the sins of the world.

Paul's object is to upset the unbelief in the resurrection of the dead, by heaping one upon another the conclusions to which, if fully and legitimately carried out, that unbelief would lead. It would involve, in the first instance, a rejection of the resurrection of Christ himself, and the denial of that resurrection would in its turn lead us to the conclusion that those who had been looking to the Saviour's death for the remission of their sins had been looking in vain, that they were yet in their sins. But a still further and still sadder inference would follow,—“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” Your dead in Christ, your fathers, your brethren, who have fallen asleep resting for the forgiveness of their sins in the completed and accepted sacrifice,—What of them, what of their present state, what of their eternal destiny, if Jesus have not risen from the grave? For them there would be no

future resurrection of the body. That *you*, ye deniers of all such resurrection, may deem no loss, as you desire it not for yourselves ; neither may it pain you to think that your departed friends shall not share in it. But have you reflected upon this, that if Jesus be not raised, and if that leave you, the living who are trusting in him, with your sins still on you, their guilt uncanceled,—it leaves them, the dead, with their sins still on them in that world into which they have passed ; it leaves them lost, it consigns them to perdition, the second death has come upon them, and from it who shall deliver ? Such seems to have been the train of thought in the apostle's mind, binding the 17th and 18th verses together. The imagined perishing at last of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, that Paul here has for the moment in his eye, could not have been their annihilation at death, their ceasing then to exist ; for how in any possible way of conceiving of it or employing it, could the fact that Christ had not risen from the tomb be made to draw after it the conclusion that those who had died trusting in the efficacy of his atoning death, at that death ceased altogether and for ever to have any existence ? It is a far worse, far darker fate than that of annihilation, that the apostle points to as awaiting those who though they had fallen asleep in Jesus, yet if he had not risen are yet in their sins even when they so died. Were the Corinthians then ready to harbour or give any

countenance to speculations and incredulities which, driven to their last logical issues, would represent their departed brethren as going down into the dark valley with a lie in their right hand, and as awakers on the other side of death to the terrible consciousness that they had believed in vain ?

And truly, adds the apostle, if it be in this life only that we have hope in Christ, if that hope be doomed at death to perish, then we of all men are most miserable. Not that the apostle is here calmly instituting a comparison between himself and his brother believers in Christ on the one hand, and the rest of mankind on the other, and as the result of such comparison, declaring that during this present life he and they were unhappier men than the others, the only thing to mitigate their greater misery the hope they had in Jesus. We may say it boldly, that even though it should turn out hereafter that all his present faith and hope in Christ were vain, the true Christian man is not more miserable, but all the happier, for his faith and hope. We do not regard the utterance of the 19th verse as a didactic statement to be logically analysed by us, but as a passionate exclamation, bursting from the apostle's lips, on the imagination starting up before his thoughts, that for him no Saviour had risen triumphant from the grave, for him no satisfying atonement had been offered up on Calvary, that he and his fellow-believers

were yet in their sins, that all of them must perish. If that be so ; if, says he, after all that I have seen and felt of my great sinfulness before God,—of my need of a Redeemer,—of the power and preciousness of the death of Christ,—if after all that I have given up, all that I have done and suffered for him whom I have counted to be my resurrection and my life,—you tell me now that it is in this life only that my hope of acceptance and of the divine favour through him can stand, then truly of all men I am the most miserable. From that great hope fling me down into that great despair, and you will not find a man on earth so miserable as I. It lightened my labours ; it comforted my griefs ; it bore me through all my conflicts. I was thrice beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night I was in the deep ; but in all kinds of perils, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger, thirst, and watchings, in fastings, in cold, in nakedness, so brightly shone that hope within my soul, that I could look back on twenty years so spent, filled up above all common measure with all sorts of suffering, and say, Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; for I reckoned that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that was to be revealed. But now, cut away from me that hope, fling me a sinful man adrift on those troubled waters, quench

all my lights, put out that opening glory beyond the grave,—no cross for me to steer by, no heavenly eternal rest to reach,—in all the wide ocean was ever mariner in such a wretched plight ?

But blessed be God, that cannot be done ! Christ hath risen ; it is not in this life only we have hope in him. Instead of being of all men the most miserable, of all men we are the most blessed. Christ hath risen, and that rising of our Lord seals our hope in him as sure, and points us to the heavenly place that he has entered, as to the regions where in an eternity of blessedness that hope shall be fulfilled. Christ hath risen ; then they also which have fallen asleep in him have not perished. He was dead, but he is alive again, and they live with him for evermore. Christ hath risen, and ye are no longer in your sins. He has taken them, he has atoned for them, he has buried them far out of sight and reach of the avenger ; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed them from you. Christ hath risen ; and in rising left behind the pledge and token that to them that are in him there is and shall be no condemnation ; for who is he that condemneth ? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Lord is risen indeed : such we are told were the joy-inspiring words with which each Lord's-day morning,

as they met for worship, the early Christians were wont to salute one another. And when we count over, as brought out in this wonderful chapter, all the benefits and blessings the rising of the Lord secured, could they, we ask ourselves, have fixed upon a fitter phrase to express at once how rich their heritage, how full their joy, how bright their hope, how firm the foundation of their trust ?

Ver. 20.—Assume for the moment -- so had the apostle put it in the preceding verses—that Christ has not risen from the dead : what would be the issue ? An empty preaching, an empty faith, an empty gospel, out of them their very core and substance taken ; the living left in their sin, the dead left to perish. Dark and dismal conclusions these ; but conclusions to which one who otherwise is a believer in Christ is shut up, if he let go his hold of that great central fact—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But now, continues the apostle, take hold of that great fact ; grasp it firmly as one of the best substantiated events in this world's past history, and then see what opposite conclusions—as bright and comforting, as the others were dark and dismal—follow from a belief in that event. That it involves the certain, final, and glorious resurrection into life of all those found in him,—this is what the apostle proceeds so distinctly and emphatically to declare.

I shall not trouble you with any speculations ; still

less shall I offer you any dogmatic deliverance upon the question how far the resurrection of the dead generally is a fruit or consequence of the resurrection of Christ. There are some who tell us that the general resurrection of the dead is no part of the remedial or mediatorial economy ; is in no sense the result of the interposition of a Redeemer ; that if Christ had not come at all, there would have been a general resurrection of the dead, notwithstanding,—the raising up of all to receive in the body the sentence of the second death. There are others who tell us that the original curse was a curse of death on the whole man, and that this curse, so long as it lay unrepealed, could not allow of the body's resurrection ; that without Christ, and apart from the redemption of our nature effected by his death, there would and could have been no resurrection ; that if there had been no interposition on behalf of the fallen, whatever had become of the souls of men their bodies must have remained under the tyranny of death. There is a link, they say, which unites Christ with every individual of the vast family of man, and that it is in virtue of this link, and of it alone, that the graves of earth shall, at the last day, yield up their dead.

It would not be difficult to suggest considerations furnished upon general conceptions of the nature and designs of the mediatorial economy, which might seem to lend a strong support to one or the other of these two

views, and it would be still less difficult, perhaps, to suggest difficulties which press upon them both.

But are we asked or bound to make our choice between them ? Are the materials in our hands to come to any positive conclusion here ? Is it of any practical moment to us to be able definitely to say what would have happened to the inhabitants of this earth, had no Saviour come, no redemption been wrought out ? Men who think they so thoroughly understand the principles of the Divine government, the plans and purposes of the Eternal, as to be able to determine what, in such an imagined state of things, should have been the result, may pronounce their verdict ; but for ourselves, we are content, on this as on so many other points, to remain in ignorance or in doubt ; confessing that, however clear the light may be which the Scriptures throw upon our present duty and our future destiny, as things now are, it does not seem to us sufficient, nor do we think it was ever meant, to let us so far into the secret counsels of the Most High as to enable us to decide upon such questions as the one now referred to.

It might, indeed, at first sight, appear that the verses which are now before us, deal with that very matter of the connexion between the resurrection of our Lord and the general resurrection of the dead. The structure, however, of the entire argument of this chapter ; the link by which its reasonings are bound together ; its

whole drift and issue, tell us that it is with the resurrection of believers, and with it exclusively, that Paul is dealing, and even here, in these verses, however general be the terms that sometimes meet us, we shall find, as we unfold their meaning, that the same holds true.

But now is Christ risen, risen as the first-fruits of them that sleep. The relation in which his resurrection stands to that of all his people, is like to that in which the first ripe grain, the first ripe fruits of autumn, stand to that whole harvest of which they form a part, and of which they furnish an earnest. You bind up that first cut sheaf of yellow corn, you pluck those first ripe grapes or olives from these fruit-laden branches, and as you do so you count with confidence, trusting in the stability of the laws of nature, that the reaping process will go on, and the broad fields and vineyards of the land will yield up their rich harvest stores. You see the Saviour rise, and in that rising you behold the pledge and promise of the rising of all who sleep in him ; the resurrection of the entire body of his redeemed is that great harvest-home of which his rising from the dead is the first-fruits ; and trusting in the stability of those laws by which the moral and spiritual government of the world is carried on, you count upon it with confidence that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up them also with him. In truth, the pledge or promise is in this latter case the more secure. Such a thing might

happen in nature as there being first-fruits with no harvest following ; those genial influences of light and warmth beneath which the fields gradually ripen, might at least be so far interfered with or checked that the promise of the first-fruits, if not utterly broken, might yet be but imperfectly fulfilled. Not so with the processes of ripening into that great spiritual harvest ; they certainly shall go on ; no process of nature more uniform or more inviolate than that by which the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides for, embraces, and secures the resurrection of all his followers.

Perhaps in using the term " first-fruits " here the apostle had in his eye that Jewish ordinance. " When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest : and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you ; on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." Before this offering of the first-fruits, no crop of the land could be reaped ; it must not be touched, nor turned to use till it was all first consecrated by this presentation of the first-fruits by the priest within the temple, before the altar. And this presentation was to take place on the second day of unleavened bread, the day after the Sabbath, the very day of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus it was that in that old rite of Judaism there passed before the eye a symbolic

representation of another and higher offering, that made by our great High Priest when, within the holy place not made with hands, he presented himself before the throne, the first-fruits of the dead, an offering accepted by the Lord, for all his people, consecrating that buried dust of theirs as dear in the Lord's sight to be quickened in due time, and gathered in to be laid up in the heavenly garner.

APPENDIX B.—P. 37.

It is interesting to compare the nine different appearances of our Lord after his resurrection mentioned in the Gospels, with the six alluded to by St. Paul in the following verses :—

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”—1 COR. xv. 3-8.

We have here the earliest written account of the resurrection of Christ, coming from the pen of the apostle of the Gentiles between twenty and thirty years after the date of the event. That account derives an additional interest from its forming part of the evidence direct and indirect furnished by the writings of St. Paul as to the facts of the gospel narrative. As compared with other witnesses to the truth of these facts, he assumes a separate and independent position, declaring

that he had himself seen the Lord and derived his knowledge of his history by direct revelation from himself.¹

Of the six appearances of our Lord to which he refers, we can identify four with one or other of those recorded in the Gospels. As he appears to place them in the order of time, the first two which he mentions, those to Cephas and to the twelve, we may regard as the same with two of the five mentioned by the evangelists as having occurred on the day of the resurrection. The other three of these five, to Mary, to the women, and to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, we may either suppose that he was not informed of, or that, knowing them, he passed them by, as happening to persons of comparatively little note and less available for the object he had in view. The appearance to above five hundred at once, we identify with the one on the Galilean mountain side. There are still two, however, of those referred to by the apostle, of which no trace is to be found in the gospel narrative—that to James and that to himself. The latter could not be alluded to in that narrative, which had nothing to do with St. Paul's life and labours ; but the omission of all reference to the former is sufficient to convince us that it was not the design of the evangelists to narrate every incident in their Master's history ; but such only as Divine wisdom directed them to select and put on record for the instruction of the Church.

¹ See his account of the institution of the Supper, of which he says, " I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

APPENDIX C.—P. 176.

BAPTISM and the Lord's Supper are the two corporate seals by which the Church signifies and authenticates entrance into and continued membership in her communion. It is mainly by the use of these that she preserves an outward and definite form as a distinct and separate society. They have served age after age to mark her off as a chartered corporation, having rules of her own, bonds of union of her own, objects of pursuit of her own, which distinguish her from all human institutions, proclaiming her heavenly birth and foretelling her heavenly destiny. But these seals are in themselves significant. A corporation seal bears generally some emblem or motto graven on it descriptive of the character and object of the institution. And the seals of the great Christian Institute have inscriptions on them rich in meaning ; which, interpreted aright, tell us what the chief truths are which the Church was appointed to guard and propagate, and what the chief ends are which she was set apart to realize. There stand out pictorially represented here the great leading instruments put by their divine founder into the Church's hands,

and the great leading results which by the use of these instruments she is to aim at and realize. Both the Christian sacraments are confessedly and conspicuously symbolic, that is, in each of them certain visible material emblems are used, to represent one or more of the great facts and truths of Christianity. In conveying his will to us, in seeking to impress the truth upon us, God has not confined himself to words—to mere verbal representation. In the earliest ages, whilst the world was yet in its rude infancy, easily affected, and of course easily seduced, by what told at once and powerfully on the senses, large use was made by the Divine Being of signs and symbols. In a picture alphabet no inconsiderable portion of the Mosaic revelation was written ; nor has the charm of its picturesque expressiveness expired. Still it is our delight to go back to those ancient times, and study those ancient characters. Large profit too as well as large pleasure attends the task. Who has not felt his faith in Christ grow clearer, his devotion to Christ grow deeper, as he took his place in thought beside the altar on the great day of atonement, and saw the shedding of the blood, and the High Priest kindle at the altar fire the incense, and felt the power of the solitude and the silence in midst of which the one representative of the great Congregation paced with solemn step across the space that separated the altar of burnt-offering from the tabernacle, entered the sacred

building, passed by the shewbread table, lifted the veil, was hid in the darkness, stood before the ark, sprinkled with blood the mercy-seat, and bowed before that strangely beautiful and lambent light by which the gracious presence of the God of Israel was symbolized ? In the Christian dispensation but little use is made of the symbolic method. That old scaffolding well nigh removed, the truth as it is in Jesus appears in its naked simplicity and grandeur, reposing upon its own firm foundations. It is but a slight help that it borrows from the senses. It addresses itself directly to the understanding, the conscience, the heart of man ; of man as he has been found in all ages, in all countries, in all conditions of slavery and freedom, of poverty and riches, of barbarism or refinement. Compare the Christianity of the New Testament with any other religion that has had a strong hold upon our race, and we shall find that it stands distinguished from them all, by its very slender employment of that species of instrumentality which tells upon the senses and the imagination. In the original institution, as it came out of the hands of its divine founder, there are only in fact these two rites, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which partake of that character, and even of them we have to say that though taking advantage of our susceptibility to be impressed more vividly through the eye than through the ear, there is nothing in them either to dazzle the rude eye or

captivate the cultivated imagination. True to her high character, Christianity, even in stooping to take up the implement by which superstition has led her millions captive, takes it up in its very simplest form, and uses it, to instruct rather than to dazzle.

Has the world ever witnessed religious rites which had less in them fitted to attract the carnal eye than the first baptisms of Christianity, effected with few conveniencies and little or no preparation ; or than the simple supper in the humble apartment at which the twelve sat down to break the bread and to drink the wine of an ordinary meal ? We shall presently indeed see that what these Christian sacraments want of what we may call pictorial power is more than made up by the rich, full, spiritual meaning, which lies condensed in them. The naked, some would even say, the severe simplicity which characterized them at their first institution, it has been attempted to cover over and supplement ; and in course of ages what a mass of superadded drapery has been gathered round them ! Look at High Mass as celebrated in a Roman Catholic cathedral—the mitred bishop robed in richest embroidered silks, the varied yet still gorgeous dresses of the priesthood marshalled round him, the evolutions without end, the marchings, the bowings, the crossings, the chantings—the dumb yet brilliant show all going on within the railed enclosure, without one thing ad-

dressed, except through the eye, to the multitude without,—look and wonder that ever such a vast ornate superstructure could have been raised upon that incident which occurred eighteen hundred years ago in an upper chamber at Jerusalem.

Before, however, we proceed to read off the true symbolic meaning of the Sacraments, let us notice that there is still another service beyond that of throwing a fresh attractiveness over them, which the enshrining of spiritual truths in outward and sensible signs effects. Truths treated in this way exist, not only in a more expressive, but in a more enduring form than if left to be transmitted either by written record, or by oral tradition. They are better protected from the influence of time and change. They have greater tenacity of life, as is witnessed in the descent of many a picturesque old custom or habit from times as to which history and even tradition is silent. What, then, were those truths of his religion which Christ selected out of all the rest, to confer upon them the exclusive privilege of being clothed with the symbolic vest and covered with the symbolic shield? In selecting them, would He not fix on those whose superior importance entitled them to that distinction? In making and fashioning the outward frames within which these truths were to be permanently enshrined, would not those be adopted which, of themselves and with least aid from an interpreter, spoke out their own

meaning ; for, if destitute of such a natural language of their own, they could but ill fulfil the object of their employment ? Let us contemplate, then, for a few moments, these two sacraments of Christianity, and study their symbolic meaning—suffering them, without let or hindrance, to tell that meaning of themselves, and not imposing on them any preconceived meaning of our own. Dealt with in this way, the first thoughtful glance that we cast upon these sacraments satisfies us that we have here certain significant actions, as well as certain significant elements. It is not the bringing out of a basin of water, and the sprinkling or pouring out of that water anywhere or anyhow which constitutes Baptism ; it is the application of that water in one way or other to a human body. It is not the bringing forth of bread and wine, and laying them upon the communion table ; it is not even the breaking of that bread, or the pouring out of that cup which constitutes the Lord's Supper. All of us would at once feel that, if the officiating minister were to stop there, the main and essential part of the communion service would remain unperformed. What is done, then, with the material emblem or element is of still greater importance—is still more significant than the material emblem or element itself ; nay, more, it is out of these symbolic actions that the true, full, distinctive meaning of the two sacraments, regarded as symbolic exhibitions of divine truth,—the light in which at the moment


we are alone regarding them,—is to be drawn. You apply water to a human body to wash it ; and when, in admitting a new member to the outward and visible communion of the Church, you apply water to his body and so baptize him, this surely typifies not any or every washing away of inward spiritual defilement, but that particular cleansing of the human spirit from the guilt of sin which takes effect when true entrance is made into the spiritual kingdom of our Lord—the baptismal passage into the visible society, being meant to shadow out that great change effected, or rather that great privilege bestowed, when, on passing into the invisible society, the true Church of God, we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the remission of sins, and rise to the new life of the redeemed, forgiven, accepted in the Lord. Baptism is the outward sign and token of that first act or stage in the spiritual life which, as it can be but once described at the period of the new birth or regeneration of the soul, so baptism is but once administered, and that when the outward tie or link with the visible communion of the saints is first formed.

Let us turn now to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Bread is broken ; wine is poured out ; and by a company assembled round a common table, that bread is eaten, that wine is drunk. The mere figurative showing forth the Lord's death as a sacrifice for sin is not and can-

not be all that is meant to be symbolically represented here. Had that been all that was intended, the emblems or elements used would not have been peculiarly appropriate or expressive. Putting aside for the moment the explanatory words of institution, and looking simply at the rite itself, and letting it, as we have said, speak out to us its own meaning, who, from the mere spectacle of a company sitting down and eating bread and drinking wine together, could have gathered that the final terminating object thereof was to symbolize the sad and awful tragedy of the crucifixion? Even if the rite had been restricted to the breaking of a piece of bread and the pouring out of a cup of wine, it would have been but an inapt emblem of a death such as that of Christ upon the cross. Long usage has indeed connected together—rightly and properly connected together—the ideas of the breaking of the bread with the breaking of his body, the pouring out of the wine with the shedding of his blood. Surely, however, there is no original or natural fitness which bread and wine possess to represent a scene of suffering and death. The Jew had a much more lively figure of the death of Christ before his eye in the slaying of an animal than the Christian has in this sacrament, if the ultimate intention here had been to show forth that death simply as a sacrifice for sin. But it is the Lord's death, not in its incidents of suffering, not in its general sacrificial character, but as

becoming, when believingly contemplated, the food, the inward source and support of that spiritual life to which, in Christ Jesus, we are begotten, that is here exhibited. In this sacred ordinance—the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine that the Son of God died in our room and stead, and, by his death, has won for us life eternal—appears not in its bare abstract form as a truth to be analysed and demonstrated and defended. No ; but in that far more important and practical light, of its yielding nourishment, refreshment, and strength to all who truly and heartily receive it into believing hearts. The bread and wine of this ordinance of the Supper, as part of their symbolic office, point us to the great death accomplished at Jerusalem,—an office which one can easily conceive other emblems might have served still more efficiently to execute ; but beyond this they serve as no other emblems that we can think of could so well have done, to hold out that death of Jesus as doing for the spiritual life of the soul what these elements themselves do for the natural life of the body. As we look upon this use of them as laid upon the communion-table to be partaken of by all seated there, their silent language is, “ Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” “ I am the bread of life ; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”

It is only when the idea is clearly apprehended and vividly realized, that it is not divine truth in itself, but that truth in its application and effects, as instrumental in originating and sustaining spiritual life, that the difference between the two sacraments comes clearly out to view. The water of baptism, no less than the bread and wine of the communion, speaks of the shedding and sprinkling of that blood without which there is no remission ; but the one ordinance being meant to be significant of the divine life within the soul at its commencement, points to that blood as then made available for the removal of bygone guilt ; the other ordinance, being meant to be significant of the divine life in its continuance and advance, points to the doctrine of the cross as made available all through life for the believer's spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. When you resolve, then, these, the sacraments of our religion, into naked and bare signs of certain facts and truths about the death of Christ, which any man, or at least all men who have historic faith in Christianity might unite in using, you take out of them the very heart and soul of their significance ; you let them open their lips, but before they have yet told half their meaning, you stifle their voice, and strike them dumb. Still, however, whether listened to or not, whether permitted to pour their meaning into open ears, or have their utterance hampered and choked throughout all



the bygone ages of the Church, throughout all that strange fluctuation of human opinion as to the words of the written testimony—these two sacraments of the Church have stood bearing their silent testimony to the double object of Messiah's death,—that our guilt should be washed away, and that afterwards there should be sustained, advanced, invigorated, and perfected the life of faith, and love, and dutiful obedience.

With these remarks on the general significance of the two sacraments of the Christian Church, and their connexion with each other, let us look a little more particularly at the ordinance of baptism. And, in the first instance, let us sum up the information, not very voluminous, given regarding it in the New Testament Scriptures. In the course of our Lord's ministry, his disciples, we are told, made and baptized more disciples than John ; but Jesus himself baptized not. He permitted his disciples to practise a rite which, as performed by them, had the same incompleteness and imperfection as that practised by the Baptist. It was not till after the resurrection that our Lord instituted what is properly to be regarded as Christian baptism.

On the day of Pentecost the excited multitude said to Peter and the rest, "Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for

the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." During the persecution against the church at Jerusalem, which arose after the martyrdom of Stephen, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to Samaria, and the people with one accord giving heed to the things that were spoken by Philip, and expressing with all appearance of sincerity their belief, they were baptized, both men and women, and among the rest Simon the sorcerer, who soon afterwards gave but too patent proof that with all his professions, his heart was not right in the sight of God. The evangelist Philip was commissioned soon afterwards on the lonely road which led from Jerusalem to Gaza to join himself to the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace. He sat with him in his chariot, and as they drove along expounded to him the chapter of Isaiah which he happened to be reading. The Ethiopian, as he heard believed, and so eager was he to be enrolled in the new community of Christians, that seeing some pool or stream of water by the way, he said to Philip, "See, here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.


And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch ; and he baptized him."

After his conversion Saul was three days without sight at Damascus ; a vision then appeared to a certain disciple named Ananias, instructing him to go and lay his hands on Saul that he might receive his sight. Nothing is told as to who or what this Ananias was ; we know only that he was not one of the twelve ; nor was he a presbyter or elder, for no one had as yet been appointed to that office. In the vision which appeared nothing was said to him about doing anything more than laying his hands upon Saul that he might receive his sight ; nevertheless, so soon as Saul received his sight, he arose and was baptized by Ananias.

When Peter went down to Cesarea and addressed the company assembled in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard his word, conferring some of the gifts bestowed on the day of Pentecost, for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God ; and when Peter saw that, he said, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized ? and he commanded them to be baptized, not administering the rite himself, but committing the administration to the disciples who had accompanied him from Joppa. At Philippi, the heart of Lydia was opened, and not only

was she baptized, but her household. At Philippi, the jailer was roused by the midnight alarm ; arrested in his meditated act of suicide, called for a light, came trembling into the prison, then had the glad tidings proclaimed, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house ; and he called out all his household, and they too heard and believed, and straightway upon the spot he and all his were baptized. On the occasion of Paul's first visit to Corinth, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized. Very few of these baptisms were performed by Paul himself ; he acted as Peter did at Cesarea,—he committed that duty to Silas or Timothy, or some of those who were with him. So little impression had the mere act of baptism made upon Paul's mind, that a few years afterwards, writing to the Corinthians, the apostle said, " I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas : besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

At Ephesus, Paul met with certain disciples who, though they had been baptized unto John's baptism, had neither received the Holy Ghost, nor heard of the Pentecostal effusion. Under the apostle's direction these were rebaptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,—a sufficient proof that the two baptisms were different ordinances, the



one temporary, the other perpetual ; the one preparatory, the other final.

Such is the amount of the information contained in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles.

In the Epistles the only allusions to the ordinance are the following :—" Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—(Romans vi. 3, 4, 5.) " For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."—(1 Cor. xii. 13.) " For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."—(Gal. iii. 27.) " One Lord, one faith, one baptism."—(Eph. iv. 5.) " In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ : buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."—(Col. ii. 11, 12.) " The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the

answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."—(1 Peter iii. 21.) These and an obscure passage in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians about being baptized for the dead, embrace all the notices of this ordinance in the New Testament from which anything can be gathered as to its nature and significance.

With these statements of the New Testament before us, what then are the conclusions to which we are naturally conducted ?

1. As to the persons by whom this ordinance is to be administered. In front of the facts that Christ himself never baptized ; that the apostles are seldom related to have done so ; that Philip, who so largely engaged in the service in Samaria, held only the appointment of a deacon, the official duties of which position in the Church had reference to the charge of the contributions of the Church ; that Ananias is not known to have held any office ; and that the brethren who accompanied Peter, and by whom the first Gentile converts at Cesarea were baptized, were private members of the Church : with these plain facts before us, we cannot surely attach exclusively the right and privilege of administering baptism to any order or class of office-bearers in the Church. Wherever the Church has had time and opportunity to mature and reduce to fixed and orderly arrangement her methods of worship and govern-

ment, it is not only a legitimate but a useful and becoming thing that this ordinance of baptism should be administered by those set apart to the office of the ministry ; but that no other baptism than that so celebrated is a valid one, following the light which the history of apostolic times affords us, we cannot say. Should a sudden and dangerous illness seize either an infant, or an unbaptized adult who had a strong desire, and was in all respects a suitable subject for the rite, should no clergyman be at hand, and in prospect of speedy dissolution, should a private Christian do for the dying child or the dying adult what Peter's attendants did for the household of Cesarea, who would be prepared to say that that was not a good and valid baptism ?

2. Again, as to the time and mode and place of baptism, so great a variety of practice is presented to us in the sacred narrative as to leave us at perfect liberty to follow whatever course in these respects, consulting for the order and general good of the Church, may suggest itself as the most appropriate. We can scarcely doubt that at least partial immersion was at first the general practice. Jesus and the Baptist, Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water and came up out of it,—processes of descent and emergence which the apostle employs in two of the passages already quoted as illustrative of the believer's death to sin and life to righteousness, the

burial with Christ, the rising again together with him. John baptized at Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there,—a reason which would not have been a valid one had our present practice of sprinkling been followed by the Baptist. On the other hand, it is inconceivable that the 3000 who were baptized on the day of Pentecost could have each gone through the same ceremonial with our Lord himself or with those who were baptized by John in the Jordan. And it is perhaps still less conceivable that within the precincts of the prison-house at Philippi any means of immersion should have been available for that hasty and midnight baptism.

Nor is any likeness or uniformity of time, or place, or circumstance observed. Now you have it in the house, now by the river, now on the road-side. Here to thousands, there to families, again to individuals ; now it is in an assembly where spectators are looking on ; now it is when none are present but the baptizer and the baptized ; by night, by day ; in public and in private ; in all kinds of ways, by all kinds of persons, in all kind of places, were those first baptisms of the Christian Church conducted. A sublime simplicity of ritual observance here, which overlooks the outward mode, and concerns itself alone with the reality and significance of the rite !

3. We touch, however, a more difficult question when we ask, Who are the persons to whom, according to the original character and design of the ordinance, and in

accordance with the original practice of the Church, this ordinance should be administered ? On the very face of the narrative it appears that baptism was the initiating rite by which members were to be admitted into the Christian society. Almost all societies which are organized with any degree of completeness and have any great and definite objects to realize, have some established mode of admission ; and as it was natural that this spiritual society, the Church, should have such a door of entrance, it pleased its Divine founder to appoint baptism to be that door. At first, and when the society was in process of formation, gathering its members out of the Jewish and heathen communities, in the midst of which it had its birth, it was obviously required of those admitted by that door that they should make a credible profession of their faith in Christ ; such faith constituting the essential element of that character to be possessed and exhibited by all true members of the Church. Baptism was to be administered, therefore,—could only with a meaning and purpose be administered, to adults who made such profession. But what exactly did baptism do for them ? what spiritual benefit did it confer ? was there any grace or gift of the Holy Spirit attached necessarily and invariably to this way of admitting new members into connexion with the visible Church ? It is to such baptisms as these, the baptisms of adults of the first

converts to Christianity, that the passages I have already quoted from the New Testament particularly apply. It is in such baptisms as these that the full virtue or efficacy, whatever we may conceive that to be, which the rite possesses, was realized. Now are there not, it may be asked, such strong expressions used regarding it in the New Testament as to forbid the idea that it was nothing more than the outward and visible sign of membership attached to those received into the Christian fellowship? Is it not said, that it is he that believeth and is baptized who shall be saved? is it not said, that we must be born of water and of the Spirit before we can enter the kingdom? Is not the water of this baptism spoken of as the washing of regeneration? Now, in answer to such questions as these, we have two remarks to offer:—

1st, Whatever spiritual benefit may, in the instances we have now before us, have been conveyed by baptism, it could not have been that described in Scripture as the regeneration or new birth of the soul; for, in every case in which the baptism was rightly celebrated, that change had been effected before this baptism took place. Repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the realizing of which within the soul its regeneration takes place—these were to precede the baptism. Unless we are prepared to say, that baptism was itself the instrument of conversion—that

those who beforehand had not been true believers were made so in and by that washing with water—we must repudiate the idea of regenerating grace accompanying the ordinance.

2*d.* The language employed regarding baptism appears to us to be perfectly warranted—to have a natural and sufficient meaning attached to it, though we regard baptism simply as the external bond by which membership in the Church was symbolized. We are called upon, not only individually to believe, but to confess that faith before men, and to do so by connecting ourselves with others of a like mind and a like heart. In these circumstances it comes as fitly and appropriately to be said, He that believeth and professes openly his faith, as that, He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. No one, however, would put a mere profession of faith in the same category with the faith itself; no one would regard the profession as occupying the same place or standing in the same relation to the salvation that the faith does; no one would say that the profession was as vitally, essentially, necessarily connected with the salvation as the faith was. It might happen that the circumstances should be such that no time or opportunity of professing was given. In such a case the faith alone, without the profession, would surely be enough. Now the being baptized is but a more striking, more solemn, more formal way of making that pro-

fession. We should not, then, confound the faith and the baptism any more than we should confound the faith and the confession ; nor are we obliged, nor are we warranted by any phraseology, however strong, employed in Scripture, to represent the one as having any more vital or essential connexion with the salvation than the other has. And here, too, it might happen—and in those apostolic times we know it did happen—that when there was genuine faith, there might be no fit time or opportunity for being baptized, as was the case with the thief on the cross. We surely could not say that the faith failed in its great object because of the absence of its appropriate external sign ? Taking baptism again as the outward sign and seal that the person on whom it was affixed had made the great spiritual transition from death to life, from unbelief to faith, had passed out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, we but proceed according to the ordinary usages of language, by which the sign and the thing signified are often identified, the expressions denoting each interchanged with the other, when we say of every true believer, that he was buried by that baptism into Christ's death, and rose out of that baptism into newness of life, without believing that the baptism was either the efficient cause, or the divinely constituted instrument by which that great inward spiritual result was wrought out in the soul. It is in such a sense as

that, and in no other, that we conceive of baptism as having to do with the regeneration or renewal of the soul by the Holy Ghost. We regard it in fact as nothing more than the Church's corporate seal, by which, in obedience to Divine command, she authenticates the admission of members into her communion, by that visible signature conferring on them a title to a participation in all her outward privileges. The use of such seal is of great importance ; it gives visibility and definiteness to the Church as a chartered corporation ; it marks it out age after age as a spiritual society separate from the world, having principles of life, bonds of union, objects of pursuit which are all her own—a kingdom among this world's kingdoms, yet owning a higher birth, and aiming at a higher destiny. And to him upon whom that admission token is impressed, and who is truly that which this token describes, one washed from his sins in the laver of regeneration, baptism is an entrance within a hallowed circle of new influences, new relationships, new companionships, into a region where a clearer light shineth, and a purer, heavenlier air is breathed.

We can detect no mystic, occult spiritual power and energy belonging by divine appointment to this initiatory rite of Christianity ; we can point to no single separate spiritual benefit which here and here only is conveyed ;

we can describe no inward spiritual change which by this instrument, and by it exclusively, is realized. Were baptism what so many affirm and believe it to be, the divinely appointed channel along which the regenerating grace of the Spirit specially, if not exclusively, descends, how could St. Paul have spoken of it thus ?—" I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius ; lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas : besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."¹ If baptism were a regenerating rite, how could Paul have been so thankful that he had baptized or regenerated so few ? Was it not sorrow rather than joy, regret rather than thankfulness, that the retrospect should have awakened in his breast ? In one sense it was not true that Christ had not sent the Apostle to baptize. He was acting under the great commission which enjoined the observance of this rite ; but just because of the place given to baptism in that commission, all the more emphatic is the testimony here borne by St. Paul to its secondary character, its comparative unimportance. So inferior, so subordinate a thing did baptizing, as compared with the preaching of the gospel, appear in his eyes, that it had no glory by reason of the glory that was more excellent, and therefore he could


¹ 1 Cor. i. 14-17.

say, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." But is it to be said that we degrade this rite, or strip it of all high significance, when we look upon it as that sacred bond which binds each member of the mystical body of the Son of God to that great spiritual commonwealth, founded on divine promises, guarded by divine power, endowed with divine energies, invested with divine privileges—that Zion of God, of which such glorious things have been spoken, to which pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the giving of the gospel and the service of God, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

Why, then, do we baptize infants? No express mention is made of infants in the command of Christ which instituted this rite; no distinct case of the baptism of infants is mentioned in the sacred narrative. Are we not acting, then, without a divine warrant? are we not contradicting the inherent nature and design of this ordinance when infants are baptized by us? If it be true, as we are distinctly taught it is, that in the spiritual commonwealth of the Church baptism takes that place which in the Jewish commonwealth was occupied by circumcision, each being the initiatory or admission rite of the society, then it will at once appear that there is scarcely an objection to the baptism of infants which might not with equal weight be urged

against the circumcision of infants. In the earliest period of Judaism the adult Abraham received circumcision, a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith which he had when yet uncircumcised, just as in the earliest ages of the Church the adult Christian received baptism, a sign and seal of that faith which he had being yet unbaptized. Afterwards the children of those originally circumcised as adults were to be circumcised in infancy ; yet Paul testifies to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Now, might it not with as much reason have been asked, How can an infant take on it that obligation to obey the law of Moses, as, How can an infant make profession of faith in Christ ? The Covenant of the Law was established with the Jewish people and their children after them, and so the sign and seal of that covenant which undoubtedly in its full express signification could be verified only on an adult, came, nevertheless, to be impressed on an infant, God dealing with the Jews in this covenant not merely as separate individuals, but as families. Shall we believe it of that new and better covenant which was established upon better promises, that it was narrower in its spirit, more limited in its reach ? Could that multitude whom Peter addressed on the day of Pentecost, whom he urged to come forward to be baptized on the very ground that the promise was to them and to their children, well believe that

the baptism thus offered to them was yet to be denied to their little ones ? Once that it was perceived that the new rite of baptism took the place of the old rite of circumcision, would not the universal Jewish instinct prompt the practice of having their infants with themselves baptized ? And even among the Gentile converts, would not the universal parental instinct act in the same way ? Were the Corinthians taught by Paul that the faith of one parent made even the children of that family holy, and was that outward holiness to be deprived of its appropriate symbol ? Were those, of whom the early converts of Christianity heard that Jesus himself once took up one of them into his arms and blessed it, and said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven—were they to be excluded from all outward and visible connexion with that Saviour, and to stand in no nearer relation to him than the children of the heathen around ? Placed in this view, and looking upon the rite of baptism as I believe they did, it is very difficult to believe that the first Christians did not claim it for their children, or that that claim was refused. True, there is no express command to baptize infants as well as adults, but neither is there any express command to admit females as well as males to the table of the Lord ; if it be the absence of such specification in the words of institution that is gone upon, women might be debarred from the one sacrament as rightfully as infants from the other.



True, there is no express command, but neither is there any express prohibition; and taking the whole circumstances of the case into account, it seems to us that a positive prohibition would have been far more needed to prevent the practice of infant baptism than a positive injunction to originate it. True, we have no distinct mention of an infant being baptized, but we are to remember that at the first and for some time no instance of the separate baptism of an infant could occur; and considering the narrow space which the New Testament narrative covers, the omission of any reference to infant baptism is not remarkable. It is rather remarkable, on the other hand, that among the few recorded cases the baptism of so many as four Christian families should have been recorded,—those of Lydia, the Philippian Jailer, Cornelius, and Stephanas,—in which families there may have been some of tender age. We cannot, indeed, prove that there were infants in any of these four households. We cannot by any clear and certain instance prove that infant baptism was an apostolic institute, was the general or universal practice of the apostolic age, but neither is there any proof on the other side, any evidence that infants were not then baptized; and we are disposed to think that the burden of the proof lies not with those who follow the practice of infant baptism, but with those who repudiate it. We have, however, one strong fact to urge. About a hundred years after

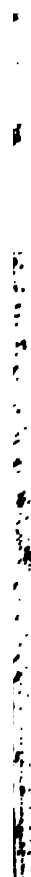
the death of Christ, historic traces present themselves of infant baptism ; not as an innovation, as only partially prevailing, as in many quarters objected to, but as the general practice of the Christian community. And we know that, from the third century down to the fifteenth, it was the universal custom of the Christian Church. Could this well have happened, if it had been set up at first in direct opposition to the practice of apostolic times ? Still, with all these considerations to urge in behalf of infant baptism, we would plead for it as a practice which the spirit of the divine command, and the genius of the Christian institute, allow us to observe, rather than a custom which the letter of the command obliges us to follow. There are those who, as you well know, cannot go with us even thus far, and who do not feel at liberty, without more express sanction than, as it seems, the Word of God contains, to do what seems to them to contravene the very nature and design of the ordinance. Of our difference with such we shall only say that it never should have been magnified into one of such weight and importance, that the Church of Christ should have divided thereupon into separate communions ; for if the Church of the apostles, acting under immediate guidance from heaven, was taught to tolerate within its bosom diversity both of opinion and practice as to the rite of circumcision, we might well

have learned to tolerate diversity of opinion and practice as to the rite of baptism.

We cling with fondness, however, to the baptism of infants. It seems to us a beautiful and impressive spectacle that Christianity should be seen thus bending over the cradle and claiming the new-born babe for Him who died for sinners, and for that blessed and glorious immortality which he hath opened up for us beyond the grave. Her presence there, her voice of love and hope, how comforting to those into whose weak hands the care from birth of a young immortal has been committed ! In presenting his child for baptism, a Christian parent undertakes a weighty responsibility ; that responsibility would rest on him the same whether his infant was baptized or not ; but a burden, too heavy for his unaided spirit to bear, does it not largely help him to bear when he is permitted from the very first, and in this sacred rite, to commit his offspring to the covenanted mercy of God in Christ ? It is as a privilege rather than a duty that we would have you bring your infants to the baptismal font, grateful to Him who suffers his holy name to be named so early over them, and casting this your greatest care on Him who careth for you and yours.

APPENDIX D.—P. 189.

It would reduce by one the number of the appearances, should the theory of Ebrard be admitted, that the appearance to Mary Magdalene was not a separate one from that to the other women ; but we are not prepared to believe this.



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